

8. Economic Thought

GANDHI was not an economist in the conventional sense of the term. He did not formulate any well-laid economic theory. His approach was essentially eclectic. Nor did he undertake the task of drawing up elaborate blue-prints for the economic development and growth of the country. As J. B. Kripalani puts it: "If ever there was a planner without elaborate blue-prints, Gandhiji was one."¹ It could not have been otherwise in the situation he was placed in. The solutions he offered for the alleviation of the economic ills that imperialism-exploited India suffered did not derive out of any rigid doctrinaire approach. The remedies he suggested came out, on the contrary, of his growing experience of the reality that confronted him at different stages of his life. Gandhian economics, if that nomenclature be permissible, was primarily a response, to use a Toynbeeian expression, to the challenge that poverty-ridden India flung at a particular phase in the process of the development of Indian history. His economic doctrines were rooted in necessity and they grew out of the social soil of India. The economic ideals he cherished were a necessary part of the elemental humanism that formed the basic core of his life and that spirit urged him on to plunging into the vortex of public life.

In considering Gandhian economics, or, for that matter, any socio-economic philosophy, the scientific procedure as suggested by Prof. N. K. Bose² should be followed. The scientific procedure is to understand and assess the doctrines in terms of the conditions that give rise to them.* Along with the objective

* "His [Gandhi's] social and economic proposals have to be understood in relation to circumstances."—P. Spratt, *Gandhism—An Analysis*, The Huxley Press, Madras, 1939, p. 510.

background the ethos has to be taken into consideration. Failing this approach pre-possessed feelings and subjective inclinations may blind our vision and lead us far away from an intelligent appreciation of the subject.

We have seen in Chapter 2 the particular socio-historical context of the emergence of that complex of Gandhi's ideas popularly known as Gandhism. It does not bear repetition here. Suffice it to mention in passing that "his mental horizon was bound by the economics of colonial rule."³ The problem of all problems that confronted India during the British Raj was POVERTY and Gandhi reacted sharply to the crushing effect and demoralizing influence of grinding poverty of the masses of the country. This obvious fact should not be lost sight of in any study, worth the name, of the economic doctrines he propounded. The role of traditional culture-patterns⁴ and the terms of the normative system of the country⁵ should not also be underestimated. For we know that economics of growth cannot altogether dispense with institutionalized traditions and value-systems. This much-known truth of the sociology of economics needs to be reaffirmed because volleys of criticism have been hurled at Gandhi's economic ideas on the basis of the dicta of text-book economics and from the standpoint of Western norms. This is more particularly relevant to the case of Gandhi who "was deeply and primarily concerned with the value-systems."⁶ Any intelligent and critical appreciation, because of its inherent discipline, takes into account the interplay of objective and subjective factors.

Gandhi has been dubbed as a social obscurantist and reactionary for his socio-economic philosophy, but little effort has been made to assess his socio-economic thought in its correct perspective. It has been assumed that he was one advocating throwback to primitivism, that he was against industrialization and machinery and that he was for putting the clock of history back. Whether this judgement is either wholly or partially valid or erroneous need not detain us for the present. At the other extreme also is to be found a school that attempts to universalize his doctrines as those of providing

lasting solutions to all the economic maladjustments to the contemporary society, irrespective of the different milieu of the highly developed and the under-developed countries. This propensity for understating or overstating the relevance of Gandhi's ideas does injustice to the basic teachings of Gandhi and betrays a bias which is a positive hindrance to any proper evaluation. The essential fact is that little attention has been paid to Gandhi's growing and developing awareness of the changing reality. This awareness of the changing reality found expression in his utterances and writings. He changed with the times, though in his own way. Gandhi grew within himself (this mental growth is not entirely independent of the changes in external reality, but that should not be taken to mean that this growth stood in mechanical dependence upon objective conditions) and his ideas are to be understood in the setting of a process of evolution. A fact-based study will reveal that on no other subject did Gandhi's views undergo such a progressive change as on what are called economic subjects, viz. machinery, industrialism, labour-capital relations, etc. The path he traversed from the *Hind Swaraj* days (1909) to the late-forties was a long one ; and the simultaneous reorientation of his outlook, within a basic pattern, became quite marked and assumed much significance.

We shall primarily concern ourselves in this study with an understanding of this remarkable evolution, and for that purpose we shall try to present his views chronologically as far as practicable. That means, we are to travel back to the respective periods in which his views were pronounced. This procedure will help us understand his point of view in the proper context ; and then only shall we be able to find out how his ideas and opinions on a particular subject had changed in course of time, when of course they did change at all. Prof. N. K. Bose draws our attention to a very significant fact that "Sometimes we may even find that only the connotation of certain terms have changed for him ; while his fundamental opinions have remained substantially unaltered."⁷ Although Gandhi employed certain terms which sound conservative and

anti-diluvian. it should be noted that "new meanings were always added to them, so that in quality, they became quite different."⁸

Before undertaking the task of tracing the evolution of Gandhi's economic thought, a few more brief introductory remarks have to be made in order to understand his basic approach to economic problems, motivations, and institutions.

Fundamental assumptions

Prof. J. J. Anjaria points out : "although as a practical reformer Gandhiji has thought primarily in terms of immediate practicability, he has gradually developed what is definitely and distinctly a system of thought. Thus Gandhism is not just a series of disjointed maxims of policy, or a catalogue of urgent reforms and remedial measures. There is a philosophy, an ideology, if we like, behind all the reforms it advocates, or to put it differently, even as Capitalism and Socialism have their own fundamental assumptions, so, too, Gandhism has its own fundamental assumptions. The Gandhian system of economic thought cannot be adequately appraised merely in terms of current economic theory which rests on certain limited assumptions. It is a challenge to those assumptions themselves."⁹

Gandhi's economic ideas were suffused with the principles of ultimate truth as he saw it. In that sense his ideas lay not only in the economic and social spheres but was closely integrated with his philosophy of life. When economics is related to this way of life it becomes 'Meta-Economics'.¹⁰ True economics, Gandhi said, stands for social justice¹¹ and moral values. The fullest statement of his views about ultimate criterion in the economic sphere is to be found in his 1916 speech at Muir College, Allahabad.¹² In that memorable speech he declared : "I venture to think that the scriptures of the world are far safer and sounder treatises on laws of economics than many modern text-books. ...He [Jesus] is himself the greatest economist of his time."

To Gandhi, economics and ethics were not two separate entities. As he put it :

"I must confess that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and therefore sinful."¹³

Or, "That economics is untrue which ignores or disregards moral values. The extension of the law of non-violence in economics means nothing less than the introduction of moral values as a factor to be considered in regulating international commerce."¹⁴

Again, "True economics never militates against the highest ethical standard, just all true ethics to be worth its name, must at the same time be also good economics. All economics that inculcates Mammon worship, and enables the strong to amass wealth at the expense of the weak, is a false and dismal science."¹⁵

The basic assumptions of Gandhi had remained more or less unaltered. His economic theories have to be read in the context of his attitude towards modern civilization which stands, as it appeared to Gandhi, for greed and exploitation. As we have discussed in Chapter 7 Gandhi's theory of civilization we need not repeat the arguments he advanced in favour of his stand. His views on civilization form the focus of his basic approach to economics.

Gandhi approached human problems from an integrated outlook of life in which economics, ethics, psychology and religion were synthesized.* Gandhian economics is the projection of his philosophy of non-violence which is essentially moral.¹⁵

Gandhi wanted economics to be reduced to terms of religion and spirituality. But since he was supersensitive to the feelings and the needs of the masses, he could never stand apart from his people. As has been correctly observed by

* cf. "Science or knowledge is one. It has been divided into several sections, not because they are mutually unconnected or independent fragments, but simply because man's faculties are limited, his capacity is finite, his ability or opportunity is, under the most favourable conditions, inadequate. But because man has made, for his own convenience, these divisions or compartments, their essential unity and integrity, their mutual affinity and dependence, cannot be gainsaid."—K. T. Shah, *Ancient Foundation of Economics in India*, p. 13., quoted in *Economic Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, eds. J. S. Mathur & A. S. Mathur, Chaitanya Publishing House, Allahabad, 1962, p. XLVII.

Frank Moraes : "To him the basic fact of economics is that man must eat. Freedom from want is the first article of his creed, and throughout his public life he has worked passionately to free his countrymen from the degradation of this poverty."¹⁷ To him poverty is soul-killing. In his words :

"No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else than moral degradation.

"Every human being has a right to live and, therefore, to find the wherewithal to feed himself and where necessary to clothe and house himself."¹⁸

Satisfaction of basic human needs and moral elevation of individuals are not antithetical for him. And that is why he could adopt a moral approach to economics.

'The two Gandhis'

Haridas T. Muzumdar has made an important observation which will help us in understanding Gandhi's economics in its correct perspective. To quote him : "In order to understand Gandhi's economics it is necessary for us to distinguish between Gandhi, the individual, with his private utopia, and Gandhi, the citizen-leader whose utopia must conform to social realities...

"Gandhi, the individual, would feel thoroughly at home in the pre-social-contract order, postulated by Rousseau...

"The private utopia of Gandhi would be an idyllic existence... an existence in which he could live in harmony with nature, labour for himself a few hours, and commune with his inner self and with God."

But, "Gandhi, the citizen-leader, did not ever attempt, nor even think of attempting, to make society over into his image. He had already come to the conclusion that he could find neither God nor his true self apart from humanity. His private utopia, therefore, has no relevance in a discussion of Gandhian economics."¹⁹

While this distinction between 'the two Gandhis' is to be borne in mind, it should not lead us to the conclusion that 'the citizen-leader' Gandhi merely suggested some economic

expedients in the social sphere by being divorced from the basic values he stood for. It would be more logical, however, to infer that within the context of the time and the situation confronting him, the economic devices and institutions formulated by Gandhi—the *Carkhā*, village self-sufficiency, trusteeship—sought to exemplify the basic values—*aparigraha*, limitation of wants, sharing (of wealth), *antyodaya* or *sarvodaya* (unto the last)—relevant to the operation of the economic system.

Ruskin's influence on Gandhi

As is well known, Ruskin exerted a tremendous influence on Gandhi.²⁰ Both Ruskin and Gandhi preached the supremacy of the spirit. Both believed in the nobility of human nature. To both, character was more important than intelligence. Both sought to moralize politics and economics. In the Ruskinian and the Gandhian philosophy, social regeneration enjoys priority over political reform. There is romantic reaction against industrialism and distrust of machinery in both, if it enslaves, rather than frees, men. And both Ruskin and Gandhi exhorted the employers to adopt a wise paternal or fraternal attitude towards their employees. Both are opposed to class-struggles. Both of them looked upon the worker potentially, at least, as a responsible individual.

It was particularly Ruskin's ideas on political economy rather than anything else* that Gandhi assimilated into his own thinking, and adopted from Ruskin without qualification the functional view of property. Tools in the hands of those who can use them and wealth restricted within fixed limits are the principles which Ruskin and Gandhi held in common. Ruskin's attack on the assumptions of political economy founded on an "ossifiant theory of progress",²¹ and on the industrial

* Ruskin's influence on Gandhi was in no sense total. As Joan Bondurant puts it: "Gandhi did not share the more conservative views of Ruskin which held the common man inferior, erected an aristocratic hierarchy, and denied the masses any political control on grounds of incompetence."—*Conquest of Violence*, Oxford University Press, Bombay Calcutta etc., 1959, p. 156.

Ruskin, in his turn, was largely influenced by Carlyle.

system is systematically set forth in his *Unto This Last*. On reading this book in South Africa Gandhi decided to change his life in accordance with the ideals of the book.²² In his words : "the one that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was *Unto This Last*. I translated it later into Gujarati, entitling it *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all)."²³ It was this work which, according to Gandhi, had inspired him to found the Phoenix Settlement (1904) on principles of bread-labour and the responsibility of the community organization to provide for the physical welfare of the worker who was its member. He understood the teachings of *Unto This Last* to be as follows :

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

3. That a life of labour, i. e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.²⁴

Gandhi remarked : "The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me. *Unto This Last* made it as clear as daylight for me that the second and the third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice."²⁵

The first lesson which is related to the good of all was in keeping with the general tenor of Ruskin's philosophy but is nowhere stated, and is assumed, if at all, only in a vague sort of way ; the second is explicitly denied since Ruskin stressed, more than anything else, the impossibility of the equality of man. Christian Socialism has been based upon the dictum : "Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way : I will give unto this last, even as unto thee." (Matt. 20, 14). Though Ruskin gave the title to the four essays as *Unto This Last*, a careful reading of the book would suggest that he did not accept Christian Socialism. He was not in favour of equality of wages, as is logically derived from the story of New Testament ; but, on the other hand, he was an advocate of

fixed wages. It is quite interesting to note that Ruskin did not explain the justification for giving such a title nor did he analyse the message of the New Testament story of the master and the servant. Digression apart, the third of the lessons was the only one which was really new to Gandhi, and is the only one in the book. Incidentally, it may be pointed out that it shows Gandhi's "habit of selecting, rather arbitrarily, some doctrine or principle from an author he reads, because it appeals to him."²⁶ This eclectic approach is characteristic of Gandhi as has been observed at the beginning of this chapter.

Evolution of Gandhi's views on industrialism and machinery

With this background in view, let us try to arrange Gandhi's views on industrialism and machinery in a chronological order and see for ourselves the process of evolution. *Hind Swaraj* or Indian Home Rule, the seminal book, as it was aptly described in a Foreword by Mahadev Desai, of Gandhian thought was originally written in Gujarati during Gandhi's return journey from England and published in *Indian Opinion* in December, 1909. Issued as a booklet in 1910, it was proscribed in India by the Government of Bombay on March 24, 1910. This hastened Gandhi's decision to publish the English translation.²⁷ The subsequent history of the book is interesting though not quite relevant here. But it is on record that in January 1921 ('A Word of Explanation' in *Young India*, 26.1.1921) Gandhi would "withdraw nothing except one word of it, and that in deference to a lady friend."²⁸

As Mahadev Desai wrote in his preface to the 1938 edition, "Even in 1938 he would alter nothing in the book, except perhaps the language in some parts."

The book contained a severe condemnation of what was termed 'modern civilization'. Gandhi's attitude towards

* "My conviction is deeper today than ever. I feel that if India will discard 'modern civilization' she can only gain by doing so. But I would warn the reader against thinking that I am today aiming at the *swaraj* described therein...still less am I trying to destroy all machinery and mills. It requires a higher simplicity and renunciation than the people are today prepared for."

industrialization was, to a large extent, influenced by his native religious faith as also by such western thinkers as Ruskin and Tolstoy. R. C. Dutta's *Economic History of India* greatly moved him. In his words: "When I read Mr. Dutta's *Economic History of India*, I wept; and as I think of it again my heart sickens. It is machinery that has impoverished India."²⁸ Analysing the results of machine-made goods on the economic life of India he came to the conclusion:

"Machinery has begun to desolate Europe. Ruination is now knocking at the English gates. Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin.

"The workers in the mills of Bombay have become slaves. The condition of the women working in the mills is shocking. When there were no mills, these women were not starving. If the machinery craze grows in our country, it will become an unhappy land. It may be considered a heresy, but I am bound to say that it were better for us to send money to Manchester and to use flimsy Manchester cloth than to multiply mills in India. By using Manchester cloth we only waste our money; but by reproducing Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price of our blood, because our very moral being will be sapped, and I call in support of my statement the very mill-hands as witnesses. And those who have amassed wealth out of factories are not likely to be better than other rich men. It would be folly to assume that an Indian Rockefeller would be better than the American Rockefeller. Impoverished India can become free, but it will be hard for any India made rich through immorality to regain its freedom. I fear we shall have to admit that moneyed men support British rule; their interest is bound up with its stability. .. Machinery is like a snake-hole...I cannot recall a single good point in connection with machinery."²⁹

In his views on machinery given in *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi levelled a general charge against machinery since its introduction had impoverished India. His charge was not against machine *qua* machine, but in so far as it stood for the enslavement of human beings. This point needs to be stressed

upon for many took him for an anti-machinist in the absolute sense of the term. Gandhi, it appears, did not depart from his original position even at the last phase of his life, although the meaning of the term 'machinery' underwent some amount of modification for him. Prof. N. K. Bose draws our attention to the fact that "In 1908, the term evidently meant for him something more than the machinery itself, for he included in it the industrial system which went along with the use of power-driven mills in India at that time. The distinction between industrialism and machinery had not yet been drawn by him. As a matter of fact, his knowledge or experience of machines was very limited."³⁰ At this stage, he did not know the distinction between the loom and the spinning wheel, and in *Hind Swaraj*, he used the word 'loom' to mean the 'wheel.'³¹ He had not even seen a handloom or a spinning wheel when he described it in *Hind Swaraj*, or even in 1915 when he returned to India from South Africa. To quote him: "I do not remember to have seen a handloom or a spinning wheel when in 1908 I described it in *Hind Swaraj* as the panacea for the growing pauperism of India. ...Even in 1915, when I returned to India from South Africa, I had not actually seen a spinning wheel. When the Satyagraha Ashram was founded at Sabarmati, we introduced a few handlooms there."³²

During the early phase of the non-co-operation movement, the economic problems of mass starvation and famines engaged his serious attention. It was not difficult for him—who had identified himself with the teeming millions of India—to recognize that the masses wanted bread and that for them 'the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages'. The years 1918-20 were marked by the outbreak of a series of working class economic strikes in a number of industrial centres throughout the country. It was for the first time that such numerous and extensive strike actions took place. The lesson of these strikes was not lost on him. The recognition of these facts led him to give a more realistic and concrete shape to his ideas. This becomes evident from the extracts given below :

"Multiplication of mills cannot solve the problem. They can only cause concentration of money and labour and thus make confusion worse confounded."³³

"We want to organize our national power not by adopting the best methods of production only, but by the best method of *both* the production and distribution."³⁴

"What India needs is not the concentration of capital in a few hands, but its distribution so as to be within easy reach of the 7 lakhs of villages that make this continent 1900 miles long and 1500 miles broad."³⁵

During this period we find in his writings an indignant protest against mills and machinery, because they tended to the concentration of capital in a few hands. His articles on Khādi during that period, as well as on subsequent occasions that we shall see presently, laid stress on distribution on an equal or equitable basis. A careful study of his writings in this period will lead to the conclusion that there was no departure from his original position of 1909.

As for the charge that Gandhi was an absolutist in respect of his denunciation of machinery, the following passage deserves to be carefully read :

"...I would favour the use of the most elaborate machinery if thereby India's pauperism and resulting idleness be avoided. I have suggested hand-spinning as the only ready means of driving away penury and making famine of work and wealth impossible. The spinning wheel itself is a piece of valuable machinery, and in my own humble way I have tried to secure improvements in it in keeping with the special conditions of India..."³⁶

Here for the first time we find him appreciating the distinction between machinery of one kind and another. He came to realize that machinery itself was not bad ; it could be used for commonweal as well as for human exploitation. This growing awareness found its expression in the writings of the period 1925-7.

"Machinery has its place ; it has come to stay. But it must not be allowed to displace necessary human labour....

"I would welcome every improvement in the cottage machine, but I know that it is criminal to displace handlabour by the introduction of power-driven spindles unless one is at the same time ready to give millions of farmers some other occupation in their home."³⁷

"That use of machinery is lawful which subserves the interest of all."³⁸

The non-co-operation movement itself was described as "an attempt to introduce, if it is at all possible, a human or humane spirit among the men behind the machinery. Organization of machinery for the purpose of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few for the exploitation of many, I hold to be altogether wrong. Much of the organization of the machinery of the present age is of that type. The movement of the spinning wheel is an organized attempt to displace machinery from that state of exclusiveness and exploitation and to place it in its proper state. Under my scheme, therefore, men in charge of machinery will think not of themselves or even of the nation to which they belong but of the whole human race. Thus Lancashire men will cease to use machinery for exploiting India and other countries but, on the contrary, they will devise means for enabling India to convert in her own villages her cotton into cloth. Nor will Americans under my scheme seek to enrich themselves by exploiting the other races of the earth through their inventive skill."³⁹

The extracts given above from the pages of *Young India* would reveal that Gandhi's ideas regarding machinery were in a process of evolution. His essentially humanistic bent of mind saw in machines a symbol of industrialism in 1909, and the the same feeling for human welfare led him to distinguish between machinery and machinery during this period (1925-27).

Gandhi was realist enough to recognize that the introduction of Carkhā will not lead to the complete extinction of the modern machine in India.

"Do I seek to destroy the mill industry, I have often been asked. If I did, I should not have pressed for the abolition of the excise duty. I want the mill industry to prosper—only I

do not want it to prosper at the expense of the country. On the contrary, if the interests of the country demand that the industry should go, I should let it go without the slightest compunction."⁴⁰

Gandhi's instinctive sense of realism drew him nearer to machinery in so far as it could lighten the burden of human toil, but his condemnation of the industrial system was expressed in a severer tone during the period 1926 to 1931. To quote him : "The present distress is undoubtedly insufferable. Pauperism must go. But industrialism is no remedy."⁴¹

Or, "Indeed, the West has had a surfeit of industrialism and exploitation. The fact is that this industrial civilization is a disease because it is *all* evil. Let us not be deceived by catchwords and phrases. I have no quarrel with steamships and telegraphs. They may stay, if they can, without the support of industrialism and all it connotes. They are not an end. They are in no way indispensable for the permanent welfare of the human race. Now that we know the use of steam and electricity, we should be able to use them on due occasion and after we have learnt to avoid industrialism. Our concern is therefore to destroy industrialism at any cost."⁴² (emphasis added)

In November 1931 he said : "Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors. It is because these factors are getting less and less every day for England, that its number of unemployed is mounting up daily. The Indian boycott was but a flea-bite. And if that is the state of England, a vast country like India cannot expect to benefit by industrialization. In fact, India, when it begins to exploit other nations—as it must do if it becomes industrialized—will be a curse for other nations, a menace to the world. And why should I think of industrializing India to exploit other nations ? Don't you see the tragedy of the situation viz., that we can find work for our 300 millions unemployed, but England can find none for its three millions and is faced with a problem that baffles the greatest intellects of England ?

The future of industrialism is dark. England has got successful competitors in America, Japan, Germany. It has competitors in the handful of mills in India, and as there has been an awakening in India, even so there will be an awakening in South Africa with its vastly richer resources—natural, mineral, and human. The mighty English look quite pigmies before the mighty races of Africa. They are noble savages after all, you will say. They are certainly noble, but no savages ; and in the course of a few years the Western nations may cease to find in Africa a dumping ground for their wares. And if the future of industrialism is dark for the West, would it not be darker still for India ?”⁴³

In another article⁴⁴ he said that his fundamental objection to machinery rested on the fact that it was machinery that had enabled the stronger nations to exploit the weaker. In itself machinery “is a wooden thing and can be turned to good purpose or bad.” His opposition to machinery became qualified at this stage.

‘Are you against all machinery ?’

“My answer is emphatically, ‘No’. But, I am against its indiscriminate multiplication. I refuse to be dazzled by the seeming triumph of machinery. I am uncompromisingly against all destructive machinery. But simple tools and instruments and such machinery as saves individual labour and lightens the burden of the millions of cottages, I should welcome.”⁴⁵

In October 1924, soon after he had broken one of his memorable fasts, he gave an interview⁴⁶ to a student from Santiniketan, Sri Ramachandran. In reply to a question as to whether he was against all machinery, Gandhi said :

“What I object to, is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on ‘saving labour’, till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all ; I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the back of millions.

The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might."

'Then you are fighting not against machinery as such, but against its abuses which are so much in evidence today.'

"I would unhesitatingly say, 'yes'; but I would add that scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be mere instruments of greed. Then labourers will not be over-worked and machinery instead of becoming a hindrance will be a help. I am aiming, not at eradication of all machinery, but limitation."

'When logically argued out, that would imply that all complicated power-driven machinery should go.'

"It might have to go, but I must make one thing clear. *The supreme consideration is man.* The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man. For instance, I would make intelligent exceptions. Take the case of the few useful things ever invented, and there is a romance about the device itself. Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hands, and simply out of his love for her he devised the sewing machine in order to save her from unnecessary labour. He, however, saved not only her labour but also the labour of everyone who could purchase a sewing-machine." (emphasis added)

'But in that case there would have to be a factory for making these Singer Sewing Machines, and it would have to contain power-driven machinery of ordinary type.'

"Yes. But I am socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalized, or State-controlled. They ought only to be working under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive. It is an alteration in the condition of labour that I want. This mad rush for wealth must cease, and the labourer must be assured, not only of a living wage, but a daily task that is not a mere drudgery. The machine will, under these conditions, be as much a help to the man working it as to the State, or the man who owns it. The

present mad rush will cease and the labourer will work (as I have said) under attractive and ideal conditions. This is but one of the exceptions I have in mind. The sewing machine had love at its back. The individual is the one supreme consideration. The saving of labour of the individual should be the object, and honest humanitarian consideration, and not greed, the motive. Replace greed by love and everything will come right."⁴⁷

This long quotation is important from many points of view. The views expressed in 1924 seem to mark a significant departure from those of 1909. We have seen above that Gandhi had already realized that there was a line between machinery and industrialism. In the passage quoted above, it seems that he had recognized that all forms of industrial organization were not necessarily wrong. In certain cases, the centralized use of machinery might be unavoidable if the object was the lightening of the burden of human labour. Gandhi pleaded for nationalization or state-control (presumably, he meant social control) in those cases.

Referring to this significant departure Prof. N. K. Bose observes : "... industrial organization itself was now losing itself some of its former sting for him, and he was prepared to use it under certain conditions."⁴⁸

Prof. D. P. Mukerji referring to the passage quoted above observed : "At this point, Gandhiji presumably believed that the state was, and would be, an agency for transforming greed into a love for humanity, though elsewhere he was less hopeful. All this appears to be a move away from the uncompromising position taken up in the *Hind Swaraj*. ...For western readers the change is like that from Tolstoy to William Morris."⁴⁹

While Gandhi did not sacrifice his 'ideal' position* the social and economic reality cast its impress upon his mind, and he was no dogmatist to reject the 'inevitable'. That he was in

* "Ideally, however, I would rule out all machinery, even as I would reject this very body, which is not helpful to salvation and seek the absolute liberation of the soul. From that point of view, I would reject all machinery, but machines will remain because like the body, they are inevitable."
—Gandhi-Ramachandran conversation in D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, The Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1961, Vol. 2, p. 162.

no mood to impose his 'ideal' prescriptions is evident from his Presidential address at the 39th Session of the Indian National Congress held at Belgaum (1924).

"I wish, too, you would dismiss from your minds the views attributed to me about machinery. In the present instance, I am no more trying to present for national acceptance all my views on machinery, than I am presenting the whole of my belief in non-violence."⁵⁰

During the mid-thirties the demand for industrialization of the country arose inside and outside the Congress ; the modern liberals like Jawaharlal, the left-nationalists like Subhas Chandra Bose, the radicals like M. N. Roy and the emerging forces of socialism inside and outside the anti-imperialist platform—all stood for industrialization. Gandhi could understand which way the wind was blowing. The assumption of office by the Congress posed concrete issue in relation to industrialization. A man of compromise in bare essentials, he was prepared to relent to a great extent, but not at the cost of his basic faith.

In 1937, to the question whether he was against the machine age, he replied :

"To say that is to caricature my views. I am not against machinery as such, but I am totally opposed to it when it masters us."

'You would not industrialize India ?'

"I would indeed, in my sense of the term. The village communities should be revived. Indian villages produced and supplied to the Indian towns and cities all their wants. India became impoverished when our cities became foreign markets and began to drain the villages dry dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign lands."

'You would then go back to the natural economy ?'

"Yes. Otherwise I should go back to the city. I am quite capable of running a big enterprise, but I deliberately sacrificed the ambition, not as a sacrifice, but because my heart rebelled against it. For I should have no share in the spoliation of the nation which is going on from day to day. But I am industrializing the village in a different way."⁵¹

Till the last days of his life he stuck to his deep faith of industrializing the villages of India—the real India as he termed it—in his own way.

On the eve of independence the issue came to the fore as quite an obvious. The socio-economic policy of independent India had to be given a definite orientation. In this background, in reply to a correspondent, he wrote :

"I don't believe that industrialization is necessary in any case for any country. It is much less so for India. Indeed, I believe that Independent India can only discharge her duty towards a groaning world by adopting a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world. High thinking is inconsistent with complicated material life based on high speed imposed on us by Mammon worship. All the graces of life are possible only when we learn the art of living nobly.

"Whether such plain living is possible for an isolated nation, however, large geographically and numerically, in the face of a world armed to the teeth and in the midst of pomp and circumstance, is a question open to the doubt of a sceptic. The answer is straight and simple. If plain life is worth living, then the attempt is worth making even though only an individual or a group makes the effort."

But, "At the same time, I believe that some key industries are necessary. I do not believe in arm-chair or armed socialism. I believe in action according to my belief, without waiting for wholesale conversion. Hence, without having to enumerate key industries, I would have State ownership, where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labour, whether skilled or unskilled, will vest in them through the State. But as I can conceive such a State only based on non-violence, I would not dispossess moneyed men by force but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversion to State ownership."⁵²

The passages quoted above from Gandhi's writings are not exhaustive ; but they are quite illustrative. It will be evident from the foregoing that Gandhi went through a long

period of transition and evolution from his extremist position of the *Hind Swaraj* days to the later concept of state ownership of industries 'where a large number of people have to work together'. The humanistic urge impelled him to move nearer and nearer to the socialist point of view regarding machinery in practice, although the development itself took place within the ambit of his basic thought-pattern. Whether or not his adoption of the socialist idea was based on a correct understanding of history is quite another matter. What is essential to note in this connexion is that he moved a long way and conceded the necessity of key industries—and that run on the basis of state ownership; the concession he made should not be taken to mean that he deviated from his basic faith and eventually became an advocate for industrialization in the sense the term is usually employed. The contention is borne out by the last-quoted passage. The idealist Gandhi stood for 'plain living' while the realist element in him recognized and reacted to, in its own way of course, the given situation.

Historical parallel : Interpretations differ

Speaking of Gandhi's opposition to machinery René Fulöp-Miller, in his study *Lenin and Gandhi* (1927), observed :

"It would, therefore, be quite wrong to judge Gandhi's movement by the standard of Western capitalist culture. When Gandhi tried to bring economic relief to his distressed country he could not look for this relief to mechanized industry, which was still almost completely undeveloped, and could not for a long time to come be anything but an insignificant foreign element in India.

"From this point of view Gandhi's action, his bitter fight against the transplantation of industry to India and even against industrialism in general, which at first sight seems utterly absurd to the European, becomes more comprehensible. Even if this hostility to the machine mainly makes use of ethical and religious arguments, nevertheless it contains a core of sober truth from the national and economic point of

view. In the economic position of India at the present moment industrialization might in fact be more of a curse than a blessing.

"With regard to the particular point of Gandhi's 'machine wrecking,' a new light has been thrown by the extraordinarily pertinent observations of the well-known Austrian socialist, Julius Braunthal, in his work, *Mahatma Gandhi und Indiens Revolution*. Braunthal, for the first time I think, has drawn attention to the very remarkable parallels between Gandhi and the English factory worker Ned Lud, and indeed the analogies between the Luddite movement* and Gandhi's are sufficiently striking."

And he continued: "Gandhi's efforts are directed not only against the industrial manufacture of textiles, but ultimately against all industry, against machinery as a whole; but here, too, his views are more in accordance with the specific position of India than might appear at first."

"Gandhi...rejects machinery only because, instead of saving the work of the individual and alleviating conditions of life for the community, it is now useful only to a minority of rich men, and inflicts infinite harm on the working masses. And as in Gandhi's eyes benefit or injury to the masses, to the poor and needy, is the sole criterion for judging every institution, this recognition of the fatal effect of industrialism on the masses leads him to reject machinery."

"The Occidental", says Braunthal, "may call it the attempt of a *petit bourgeois* reactionary, and it even appears as such if objectively regarded from a more advanced historical stage; but if it is looked at from the angle of the peculiar historical development and the social and economic conditions of India, this rebellion against capitalism assumes greater revolutionary significance than, say, the rebellion of the Luddites against machinery."

"The hatred of machinery", says Braunthal, "the hatred of capitalism, which burns so strongly in Gandhi, is the reflection

* For a detailed study of the Luddites, see E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1963, p. 587 ff.

of the hate of millions of Indian peasants and handworkers, whose traditional basis of existence was completely destroyed by capitalism and who were excluded from the possibility of existence on a capitalist basis as a factory proletariat. It is the cry of the Luddites which wrings Gandhi's breast, when he condemns capitalism, the capitalist age, and modern civilization as a monstrous depravity, a black age of darkness..."⁵³

P. Spratt in his analysis (1939) differs from Fulöp-Miller. He holds: "The parallel which Fulop-Miller draws between Mr. Gandhi and the Luddites has..... little value, though it may apply to some of his followers in India. A more exact comparison would be with Cobbett. ...It is true that Mr. Gandhi now uses the argument that industrialism creates unemployment, but the main reasons for his criticism are quite different....

"A more instructive parallel is provided by John Wesley, whose missionary efforts did so much to spread thrift, sobriety and industry among the lower classes in England in the XVIII and early XIX centuries. Wesley recognised that his teaching promoted riches, yet he denounced luxury and the accumulation of wealth no less vigorously than he applauded thrift and industry. His solution of the difficulty was charity: all wealth above a quantity sufficient to provide the plain necessities of life was to be given away. Wesley nevertheless helped considerably to strengthen and promote the advance of capitalism in England and America. Mr. Gandhi also lives during the earlier stages of the formation of a capitalist class, in the period of the adoption of capitalist habits of life and ways of thinking by people whose traditions are non-capitalist or pre-capitalist. His doctrine is also such that while part of it may encourage capitalist ways of life and thought, as Wesley's did, another part is directly opposed to capitalist ideas and is such as to prevent their progress. The similarity is due not only to the broad similarity of their social environments, but also to the influence of the one upon the other: Mr. Gandhi associated, especially in South Africa, with religious people of all persuasions, probably for the most part non-conformists, and directly and

through the Indian Victorians, came into contact with English Liberal thought.

"Mr. Gandhi however has had the advantage of acquaintance also with the later phases of capitalism, with a well developed industrial system."⁵⁴

Analogies are not always helpful in understanding the exact nature of the problem. For in the words of the German sociologist, L. von Weise, 'Analogy is no homology'. But even then we cannot altogether dispense with parallels and analogies. In our opinion, if any historical parallel is to be drawn, one should look to Carlyle (1795—1881) and Ruskin (1819—1900) for such a parallel. As is well known, the sensitive minds—poets, writers, and artists—rebelled and protested in words and colours against the new ugliness of nineteenth-century capitalism and, in looking at that ugliness, were brought to see horror and misery that underlay it and the smugness and greediness that perpetuated it.^{55*}

There were two types of reaction to this phenomenon of industrial exploitation. Some who had grasped the forces at work for change wanted to direct the dynamics, wanted to accelerate the progress and thus shorten the period of pain. There were others who, being horrified at the toll of human sufferings demanded by the change, urged a return to the earlier pre-industrial period of history. This type of reaction is known as Romantic reaction. Carlyle and Ruskin represented this romantic reaction. The Romanticists had neither the wish nor the understanding to push their analysis to the point of the class and property basis of society⁵⁶ and therein lay the failure of Romanticism in becoming the social mode of expression of the rising working class. But "this is not to say that the romantic movement was unimportant or unjustified. On the contrary,

* To illustrate : William Blake (1757—1827) wrote a poem directed 'against the satanic mills' :

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet,
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

—Quoted in Jürgen Kuczynski, *The Rise of the Working Class*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd., London, 1967, p. 55.

one cannot comprehend the typical dilemmas of the new civilization unless one understands the reason and rationale of the romantic reaction against it..."⁵⁷

Gandhi, in his earlier days particularly, gave expression to such feelings. The main fount of inspiration for the Romanticists of England and for Gandhi was one and the same—elemental humanism. Gandhi's reaction was not sterile and merely sentimental, as was the case in most of the countries, nor was it retrograde. As Ashoka Mehta has correctly pointed out: "Their similarities are patent but its uniqueness is equally important."⁵⁸ And it is this uniqueness that deserves appreciation.

Critique of capitalism

Brutal exploitation of man under the system of capitalism evoked Gandhi's protest and he condemned the system in no uncertain terms. His denunciation of the acquisitive society stemmed out of his intense feelings and deep concern for the downtrodden humanity. For him the only yardstick of judging any economic system was human welfare. He judged economic institutions in terms of common good or good of all. That was his credo. To him, accumulation of capital was immoral; it ran counter to his concept of non-possession, *aparigraha*. He extended his ethical principles to the domain of property relationship. That he looked at the problem from a moral point of view would be evident from the following passage:

"I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use, and keep it, I thief it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day-to-day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world. But so long as we have got this inequality so long we are thieving."⁵⁹

For him, accumulation of wealth always involves violence.⁶⁰ The solutions he offered for the elimination of capitalism were guided by this ethical outlook. One may rightly hold that his

means of attaining an ideal economic order rid of exploitation was more moral than sociological.

Prof. M. L. Dantwala in his *Gandhism Reconsidered* (1944) has suggested that Gandhi's opposition to capitalism was not based on any logic, like that of the materialist conception of history propounded by Marx, from which to arrive at the inevitability of socialism. Gandhi did not adopt any theory of value which could explain accumulation of the surplus value. He opposed capitalism, because there was too much of inequality in it. He championed the cause of the dumb and the semi-starved, and wanted to bring about a decent and higher standard of living for them. Changes in the social order and in the existing economic system were necessary for improving the conditions of the poor. These changes could be possible if the capitalistic principle of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market was not adhered to. As against the practice of following the capitalistic norm of economic propriety and justice, the Gandhian order postulated social justice which protected starving millions. In the Gandhian society there is economic equality; industries are run not on profit basis. Unlike in the capitalist society, the enterprises in this system are not guided by the consideration of large consumption and higher profit but solely by the principle of producing decent conditions of living for both the producers and the consumers. Gandhi opposed capitalism because he did not subscribe to the capitalistic code of justice.

Dr. Kenneth Rivett observes: "To see exactly what Gandhi opposed, and from what standpoint, we must borrow Max Weber's distinction between the budgetary unit and the profit-making enterprise.

"Weber distinguished budgetary units from units where the test of success is profit—profit being measured by the rise in the value of all a firm's assets over time, *i.e.* by capital values. Doubtless the profit is then used, at one or several removes, to create marginal utilities, but the men who make it need not think twice about them.

"...the distinction between them is one of degree.

"What he [Gandhi] objected to was the allocation of all productive resources on the basis of capital values. ...Gandhi would not have said that cost was irrelevant to all decisions about allocating resources—if one sort of spinning-wheel cost less than another, that was a point in its favour—but he would have held that some decisions about the use of resources should not be based on the profit test alone."⁶¹

Spratt observes that his protest was not so much against wealth as against inequality.⁶² This analysis helps us to understand Gandhi's views on trusteeship and socialism in a proper perspective.

Background : Gandhi's views on Class War, Trusteeship, Socialism, etc.

With the passage of time his criticism of capitalism grew severer. The soul-killing process and the economic inequality generated by capitalism repelled him and he tried in his own way to bring about an end to the rule of capital. The ideal society, as he conceived it, was not to be brought about by forcible overthrow of capitalism but by pursuing the principle of trusteeship. And that was in keeping with his general creed of conversion since he believed that man was not beyond redemption. The theory of conversion or change of heart follows from his concept of human nature (see p. 111 *supra*).

Before we start discussing his views on labour-capital relations, trusteeship, socialism, etc., another point should be made clear which has been hinted at the beginning of this chapter.

Gandhi lived and moved in a specific historical period and he took upon himself, or history assigned its task to him, as one would like to put it, the historic task of leading the Indian nation against political subjugation. In exaggerated enthusiasm of portraying him as a world teacher his role as the supreme political leader of the country should not be underestimated. And the ideology of that political movement was nationalism which is essentially, and necessarily too, multi-class in character. This multi-class composition of the movement, it seems, exerted its influence on Gandhi's thinking process. That gives us a clue to the

understanding of the development of his ideas. Besides, as we know, it was in South Africa where all his main ideas were derived, and there the class question in the Indian community was entirely negligible. It was there as the leader of the Indian community as a whole that he had led the movement. While Gandhi appeared on the Indian scene, the class question was not on the agenda. It was only after the emergence of the militant Trade Union movement in industrial centres like Bombay and the peasant movement in U. P. that the class question made itself a generally recognized factor in public life. The new emerging socialist forces also made their impact felt on the national movement. With the installation of Congress ministries in provinces the issue came to the fore. This objective background should be borne in mind. Lest there be any misreading of this analysis, it should be made clear that this does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that because of this objective compulsion of combining the antagonistic class forces round the banner of nationalism, Gandhi yielded ground to the capitalist system personally or acquiesced in the exploitative capitalist system. The Indian capitalists who closely allied themselves to Gandhi at different phases of his life for their own reasons (since the role of the Indian capitalists in national liberation movement and their association with Gandhi do not come within the purview of the present study, we leave that out) did not escape his severe condemnation on occasions. Incidentally, it may be pointed out that he did not employ the terms 'Capitalism', 'Capitalists', etc., in the technical sense, but used them in a broad sense to denote the exploitative system and 'a few who ride on the back of millions'.

The following sections on Capital and Labour, Class War, Economic Equality, Trusteeship and Socialism should be read together to have a clearer picture of his views. An integral approach can be discerned in such an arrangement.

On Capital and Labour

The moral strain in his attitude towards Labour-Capital relations is found since his Ahmedabad days (1918). As he

repeatedly said : "The success of the workers entirely depends on the justice of their demands and their correct behaviour."⁶³ He wanted the labourers to raise themselves to the status of part-proprietors.⁶⁴

During the days of non-co-operation, he wrote : "The avowed policy of Non-co-operation has been not to make political use of disputes between Labour and Capital. They have endeavoured to hold the balance evenly between the two—we would be fools if we wantonly set labour against capital. It would be just the way to play into the hands of a Government which would greatly strengthen its hold on the country by setting capitalists against labourers and vice versa."⁶⁵

Pleading for 'the establishment of right relations between capital and labour', he said in 1925 : "Swaraj as conceived by me does not mean the end of kingship. Nor does it mean the end of capital. Accumulated capital means ruling power. I am for the establishment of right relations between capital and labour etc. I do not wish for the supremacy of the one over the other. I do not think there is any natural antagonism between them. The rich and the poor will always be with us. But their mutual relations will be subject to constant change."⁶⁶

The next year he wrote : "I do not fight shy of capital. I fight capitalism. The West teaches us to avoid concentration of capital, to avoid a racial war in another and deadlier form. Capital and labour need not be antagonistic to each other. I cannot picture to myself a time when no man shall be richer than another. But I do picture to myself a time when the rich will spurn to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor and the poor will cease to envy the rich. Even in a most perfect world, we shall fail to avoid inequalities, but we can and must avoid strife and bitterness. There are numerous examples extant of the rich and the poor living in perfect friendliness. We have but to multiply such instances."⁶⁷

In 1927 the workers of the Maharaja Mills, Bangalore, were on strike. In a fairly long talk given to them one evening when they gathered to present a purse to him, he said : "I do not think there need be any clash between capital and labour. Each

is dependent on the other. What is essential today is that the capitalist should not lord over the labourer. In my opinion the mill hands are as much the proprietors of their mills as the shareholders, and when the mill-owners realize that the mill hands are as much mill-owners as they, there will be no quarrel between them. But there is no right in the world that does not presuppose a duty. An owner never spoils his property. When you know that the mill is as much yours as of the mill-owners, you will never damage your property, you will never angrily destroy cloth or machinery with a view to squaring your quarrel with the mill-owners. Fight, if you must, on the path of righteousness and God will be with you. There is no royal road, I repeat, to gaining your rights except self-purification and suffering."⁶⁸

The 1917 revolution of Russia broadcast its message of 'expropriation of the expropriators' and of ushering in a new era of socialism. The news of the conquest of political power by the working class was spread far beyond the frontiers of Russia. And India was not immune to the 'contagious' spell of Bolshevism. The working class of India, so long politically and organizationally immature, began to show signs of adulthood. A sharp left-wing orientation in the Indian Trade Union movement became visible after 1927. Class struggle as a method of TU movement was advocated in this period. Jawaharlal's articles on Soviet Russia⁶⁹ (one of the articles, 'Education', appeared in *Young India*) and the inauguration of five-year plans in Soviet Union evoked great admiration from the radical youth. A wave of leftist ideas was surging all round. In a word, there was a new impulse throughout the country. Gandhi, it seems, responded to this atmosphere in his own characteristic way. Students of Gujarāt Vidyāpīṭh discussed Bolshevism with Gandhi, who defined his own attitude in the following terms :

"I must confess that I have not yet been able fully to understand the meaning of Bolshevism. All that I know is that it aims at the abolition of the institution of private property. This is only an application of the ethical ideal of non-possession in the realm of economics and if the people adopted this ideal

of their own accord or could be made to accept it by means of peaceful persuasion, there would be nothing like it. But from what I know of Bolshevism it not only does not preclude the use of force but freely sanctions it for the expropriation of private property and for maintaining the collective State ownership of the same. And if that is so I have no hesitation in saying that the Bolshevik regime in its present form cannot last for long. For it is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence. But be that as it may, there is no questioning the fact that the Bolshevik ideal has behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men and women who have given up their all for its sake, and an ideal that is sanctified by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin cannot go in vain: the noble example of their renunciation will be emblazoned for ever and quicken and purify the ideal as time passes."⁷⁰

In the passage quoted above we find him appreciating the 'ethical ideal of non-possession in the realm of economics', though his disapproval of the Bolshevik method was unequivocal. He did not accept for his basic belief the Bolshevik way of forcible and violent expropriation of private property and collective state ownership, yet he is seen to be moved 'by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin'. This was, it seems, a move away, though within the same orbit, from his earlier position of 1919:

"Bolshevism is the necessary result of modern materialistic civilization. Its insensate worship of matter has given rise to a school which has been brought up to look upon materialistic advancement as the goal and which has lost all touch with the final things of life."⁷¹

During a speech before an audience of young communists in England in 1931, when Gandhi went there to attend the Second Round Table Conference, the following conversation took place:

'How exactly do you think the Indian princes, landlords, mill-owners and money-lenders and other profiteers are enriched?'

"At the present moment by exploiting the masses."

"Can these classes be enriched without the exploitation of the Indian workers and peasants ?"

"To a certain extent, yes."

"Have these classes any social justification to live more comfortably than the ordinary worker and peasant who does the work which provides the wealth ?"

"No justification. My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunity, all have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or degree of intelligence, etc. Therefore, in the nature of things, some will have ability to earn more and others less. People with talents will have more, and they will utilize their talents for this purpose. If they utilize their talents kindly, they will be performing the work of the State. Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father goes to the common family fund. They would have their earnings only as trustees. It may be that I would fail miserably in this. But that is what I am sailing for."

"The Maharajas and landlords sided with the British. But, you find your support in the masses. The masses, however, see in them their enemy. What would be your attitude if the masses decided the fate of these classes when they are in power ?"

"The masses do not today see in landlords and other profiteers their enemy. But the consciousness of the wrong done to them by these classes has to be created in them. I do not teach the masses to regard the capitalists as their enemies, but I teach them that they are their own enemies. Non-co-operators never told the people that the British or General Dyer were bad, but that they were the victims of a system. So that the system must be destroyed and not the individual."

'If you want to attack a system there can be no difference between an Indian capitalist and an English capitalist. Why do you not apply non-payment of taxes to Zamindars ?'

"A zamindar is merely a tool of a system. It is not necessary to take up a movement against him at the same time as against the British system. It is possible to distinguish between the two. But, we had to tell the people not to pay to the zamindars, because, out of this money the zamindars paid to the Government. But, we have no quarrel with the zamindars as such, so long as they act well by the tenants." 72

On Class War

The growing pauperization of rural India and the intense exploitation of industrial working class, more keenly felt round about the days of the general crisis of world capitalism of the early thirties, had its bearing on the national situation of India. The newly emerging movements and forces exerted their pressure on the Indian National Congress as a result of which the latter included in its programme a charter of fundamental rights guaranteeing democratic rights and ameliorative economic measures to the workers and peasants. The whole country was in a ferment.

Referring to the zamindars Gandhi warned "the capitalist class to read the sign of the times and revise their notions of God-given right to all they possess." In the same article he continued, "There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist of superfluities and consequent acquisition of the real happiness of all on the one hand, and on the other the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge the country and which not even the armed forces that a powerful Government can bring into play can avert." 73

"Q. But what about the zamindar ? Would you eliminate him ? Would you destroy him ?

A. I do not want to destroy the zamindar, but neither do I feel that the zamindar is inevitable. I expect to convert the

zamindars and other capitalists by the non-violent method, and therefore there is for me nothing like an inevitability of class conflict. For it is an essential part of non-violence to go along the line of least resistance. The moment the cultivators of the soil realize their power, the zamindari evil will be sterilized. What can the poor zamindar do when they say that they will simply not work the land unless they are paid enough to feed and clothe and educate themselves and their children in a decent manner. In reality the toiler is the owner of what he produces. If the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power. That is how I do not see the necessity of class conflict. If I thought it inevitable, I should not hesitate to preach it and teach it."⁷⁴

"I never said that there should be co-operation between the exploiter and the exploited so long as exploitation and the will to exploit persists. Only I do not believe that the capitalists and the landlords are all exploiters by an inherent necessity, or that there is a basic or irreconcilable antagonism between their interests and those of the masses. All exploitation is based on co-operation, willing or forced, of the exploited. However much we may detest admitting it, the fact remains that there would be no exploitation if people refuse to obey the exploiter. ...What is needed is not the extinction of landlords and capitalists, but a transformation of the existing relationship between them and the masses into something healthier and purer.

"The idea of class war does not appeal to me. In India a class war is not only not inevitable, but it is avoidable if we have understood the message of non-violence. Those who talk about class war as being inevitable, have not understood the implications of non-violence or have understood them only skin-deep."⁷⁵

Or, "Exploitation of the poor can be extinguished not by effecting the destruction of a few millionaires, but by removing the ignorance of the poor and teaching them to non-co-operate with their exploiters. That will convert the exploiters also. I have even suggested that ultimately it will lead to both

being equal partners. Capital as such is not evil ; it is its wrong use that is evil. Capital in some form or other will always be needed."⁷⁶

During the Second World War he wrote : "I have visions that the end of this war will mean also the end of this rule of the capital. I see coming the day of the rule of poor, whether that rule be through force of arms or of non-violence."⁷⁷ This certainly is a long way forward from his earlier position of 1925 (passage cited in p. 224 *supra*).

The Second World War brought in its train indescribable miseries for the peoples of this country. The situation in the country was explosive. In Gandhi's own words : "England is sitting on an unexploded mine in India and it may explode any day."⁷⁸

It is in this background that Gandhi's ideas were taking a new shape at about this time. As early as June 1942 he gave several important interviews to Louis Fischer, in course of which he drew a picture of his contemplated civil disobedience movement.

"In the villages," Gandhi explained, "the peasants will stop paying the taxes. ...But refusal to pay it will give the peasants courage to think that they are capable of independent action. Their next step will be to seize the land."

"With violence ?" Mr. Fischer asked.

"There may be violence," Gandhi rejoined. "But then again the landlords may co-operate."

"You are an optimist," Mr. Fischer remarked.

"They might co-operate by fleeing," Gandhi said.⁷⁹

Or, "What would happen in a free India ? What is your programme for the improvement of the lot of the peasantry ?" Louis Fischer asked in an interview with Gandhi on 6 June 1942.

"The peasants would take the land. We would not have to tell them to take it. They would take it."

"Would the landlords be compensated ?"

"No," he said. "That would be fiscally impossible. You see," he smiled, "our gratitude to our millionaire friends does not prevent us from saying such things."⁸⁰

It has been generally assumed that Gandhi did not recognize the existence of class struggle. Let us see what he himself had to say on the subject: "The correspondent is wrong in suggesting that I do not believe in the existence of class struggle. What I do not believe in is the necessity of fomenting and keeping it up. I entertain a growing belief that it is perfectly possible to avoid it. There is no virtue in fomenting it, as there is in preventing it."⁸¹

This is very suggestive indeed, for while he did not fail to recognize the social reality of antagonism between classes, he, because of his basic belief in conversion through non-violent means, was opposed to 'the necessity of class conflict'. What did Gandhi mean when he pronounced his opposition to the necessity of class conflict? Observes Prof. N. K. Bose: "...when the term 'class war' was used by Gandhi he always meant war in terms of violence. He never looked upon satyagraha for the sake of establishment of economic equality as 'war' because it was non-violent. Yet, in the sense in which Marx himself used the term, such non-violent non-co-operation would be no less a form of class war than its violent manifestation."⁸²

As Marx's position is generally misunderstood, a brief note may be added in passing. It has been a common fashion to portray him as the prophet of class struggle. But in fact it would be wrong to suppose that Marx *advocated* class struggle: it was only in order to abolish the class distinctions and establish a classless society that he outlined a new scientific philosophy for humanity to follow. In a letter to Weydemeyer dated 5 March 1852, Marx wrote:

"...as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society nor yet the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the *existence of classes* is only bound up with *particular, historic phases in the development of production*; (2) that the class struggle

necessarily leads to the *dictatorship of the proletariat*; (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*."⁸³

While Marx and Gandhi both stood for an egalitarian social order, they differed in their methods* and approaches regarding the realization of such a society.

Theory of Trusteeship

Gandhi, while attacking the inequitable and unjustifiable basis of capitalism and vested interests, went on pleading for the adoption of trusteeship. The theory of trusteeship occupies a central place in the scheme of Gandhian thought and as such it demands our close attention.

Trusteeship was not just an economic expedient for Gandhi; it was 'no makeshift'. For him trusteeship had its philosophic appeal too. In his words: "My theory of trusteeship is no makeshift, certainly no camouflage. ...It has the sanction of philosophy and religion behind it."⁸⁴ The idea of trusteeship is integrally related to the concept of *aparigraha*. As Prof. D. P. Mukerji observed: "Trusteeship, for Gandhiji, was an interim measure sanctioned by Indian traditions."⁸⁵*** The concept is to be viewed in the context of the values it stood for. It is embedded in the matrix of those values. The doctrine is as old as the ages. But it was Gandhi who tried to apply this philosophical teaching to the concrete realities of life, to the solution of the existing economic maladies.

Being influenced by the ideals of the *Īsopaniṣad* Gandhi stated that things of this world should be enjoyed by renun-

* "They [the capitalists] know that I desire to end capitalism almost, if not quite, as much as the most advanced socialist or even communist. But our methods differ, our languages differ."—Gandhi in *Harijan*, 16-12-39, p. 376.

** "Property, according to the Hindu view, is a mandate held by its possessors for the common use and benefit of the commonwealth. The *Bhāgavata* tells us that we have a claim only to so much as would satisfy our hunger. If any one desires more, he is a thief deserving punishment."—S. Radhakrishnan, 'The Individual and the Social Order in Hinduism' in E. R. Hughes (Ed.), *The Individual in East and West*, Oxford University Press, 1937, p. 127.

ciation.* As he stated in his *Autobiography*, words like *aparigraha* (non-possession) and *samabhāva* (equability) gripped him. His study of English law also came to his help in deciding upon his divesting himself of all possessions. To quote from his *Autobiography*: "My study of English law came to my help. Snell's discussion of the maxims of Equity came to my memory. I understood more clearly in the light of the Gita teaching the implication of the word 'trustee'. My regard for jurisprudence increased, I discovered in it religion."⁸⁶ Non-possession and equability for him presupposed 'a change of heart, a change of attitude'. This was during his early South Africa days.

In a letter to Polak who was at the time in India, Gandhi expressed his views on modern civilization, and it was there that he employed the word 'trustee' for the first time.⁸⁷ Laying his heart bare before the august audience assembled on the occasion of the opening of the Benaras Hindu University on 4 February 1916, Gandhi appealed to the 'richly bedecked noblemen' present on dais to strip themselves of the jewellery and 'hold it in trust' for their countrymen in India.⁸⁸ It was his 'first plunge' in Indian public life. And at the first stroke he hit at the core of the problem.

On the eve of the Salt Satyāgraha in 1930, he wrote: "The greatest obstacle in the path of non-violence is the presence in our midst of the indigenous interests that have sprung up from British rule, the interests of moneyed men, speculators, scrip-holders, landholders, factoryowners and the like. All these do not always realize that they are living on the blood of the masses, and when they do, they become as callous as the British principals whose tools and agents they are. If like the Japanese Samurai they could but realize that they must give up their blood-stained gains, the battle is won for non-violence. It must not be difficult for them to see that

* "Gandhi based his 'trusteeship' doctrine on a celebrated verse in the ancient Hindu philosophical scripture, *Ishopanishad*, which says: 'All that is in the universe is pervaded by God. Renounce first, therefore, in order to enjoy. Covet not anybody's riches'."—Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1953, Vol. 2, p. 624.

the holding of millions is a crime when millions of their own kith and kin are starving and that, therefore, they must give up their agency. No principal has yet been found able to work without faithful agents.

"But non-violence has to be patient with these as with the British principals. The aim of the non-violent worker must ever be to convert. He may not however wait endlessly. When therefore the limit is reached, he takes risks and conceives plans of active *satyagraha* which may mean civil disobedience and the like. His patience is never exhausted to the point of giving up his creed."⁸⁹

In an interview with Prof. N. K. Bóse on 9 and 10 November 1934, Gandhi explained why he preferred the doctrine of trusteeship.

"Love and exclusive possession can never go together. ... perfection in love or non-possession will remain an unattainable ideal as long as we are alive, but towards which we must ceaselessly strive.

"Those who own money now are asked to behave like trustees holding their riches on behalf of the poor. You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But if people meditate over it constantly and try to act up to it, then life on earth would be governed far more by love than it is at present. Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid's definition of a point, and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go further in realizing a state of equality on earth than by any other method.

Q. If you say that private possession is incompatible with non-violence, why do you put up with it ?

A. That is a concession one has to make to those who earn money but who would not voluntarily use their earnings for the benefit of mankind.

Q. Why then not have State ownership in place of private property and thus minimize violence ?

A. It is better than private ownership. But that too is objectionable on the ground of violence. It is my firm conviction that if the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will

be caught in the evils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time. The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship."⁹⁰

In 1939, in reply to a question by a member of the Gandhi Sevā Samgha, he explained the theory of trusteeship in the following terms :

"Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth—either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry—I must know that all the wealth does not belong to me ; what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community. I enunciated this theory when the socialist theory was placed before the country in respect to the possessions held by zamindars and ruling chiefs. They would do away with these privileged classes. I want them to outgrow their greed and sense of possession, and to come down in spite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour. The labourer has to realize that the wealthy man is less owner of his wealth than the labourer is owner of his own, viz., the power to work.

"The question how many can be real trustees according to this definition is beside the point. If the theory is true, it is immaterial whether many live up to it or only one man lives up to it. The question is of conviction. If you accept the principle of *Ahimsa*, you have to strive to live up to it, no matter whether you succeed or fail. There is nothing in this theory which can be said to be beyond the grasp of intellect, though you may say it is difficult of practice."⁹¹

And later in 1942 : "...the rich should ponder well as to what is their duty today. They who employ mercenaries to guard their wealth may find those very guardians turning on them. The moneyed classes have got to learn how to fight either with arms or with the weapon of non-violence. For

those who wish to follow the latter way, the best and most effective *mantram* is : *tena tyaktena bhuñjithāh* (Enjoy thy wealth by renouncing it). Expanded it means : 'Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours ; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society'."²

With reference to the above remarks, Shankarrao Deo raised a query to which Gandhi replied in the *Harijan* of Feb. 22, 1942, p. 49, in an article 'Not Necessarily Impure', an extract of which is given below :

"Why first earn crores and then use them for society ? As society today is constituted the means of earning crores are bound to be impure ; and one who earns crores by impure means cannot be expected to follow the *mantram tena tyaktena bhuñjithāh* because in the very process of earning crores by impure means the man's character is bound to be tainted or vitiated.

"I request you to emphasize as much, if not more, the purity of means of earning money as on spending. If purity of means is strictly observed, then, according to me, crores could not be accumulated at all and the difficulty of spending for society will assume a very minor prospect."

Gandhi answered : "I must demur. Surely a man may conceivably make crores through strictly pure means, assuming that a man may legitimately possess riches. For the purpose of my argument, I have assumed that private possession itself is not held to be impure. If I own a mining lease and I tumble upon a diamond of rare value, I may suddenly find myself a millionaire without being held guilty of having used impure means. This actually happened when Cullinan diamond, much more valuable than the Kohinoor, was found. Such instances can be easily multiplied. My argument was surely addressed to such men. I have no hesitation in endorsing the proposition that generally rich men and for that matter most men are not particular as to the way they make money. In the application of the method of non-violence, one must believe in the possibility of every person, however, depraved, being reformed

under humane and skilled treatment. We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response."

He also said : "But I accept the proposition that it is better not to desire wealth than to acquire it and become a trustee. I gave up my own long ago, which should be proof enough of what I would like others to do. But what am I to advise those who are already wealthy or who would not shed the desire for wealth ? I can only say to them that they should use their wealth for service.

"Personally I do not believe in inherited riches. The well-to-do should educate and bring up their children so that they may learn how to be independent. The tragedy is that they do not do so. Their children get some education, they even recite verses in praise of poverty, but they have no compunction about helping themselves to parental wealth. That being so, I exercise my common sense and advise what is practicable."⁹³

And then,

"Q. From your writings one gathers the notion that your 'trustee' is not anything more than a very benevolent philanthropist and donor, such as the first Parsi Barozet, the Tatas, the Wadias, the Birlas, Shri Bajaj and the like. Is that so ? Will you please explain whom you regard as the primary or rightful beneficiaries of the possessions of a rich man ? Is there to be a limit to the amount or part of the income and which he can spend upon himself, his kith and kin and for non-public purposes ? Can one who exceeds such limit be prevented from doing so ? If he is incompetent or otherwise fails to discharge his obligations as a trustee, can he be removed and called upon to render accounts by a beneficiary or the State ? Does the same principle apply to princes and zamindars, or is their trusteeship of a different nature ?

A. If the trusteeship idea catches, philanthropy, as we know it, will disappear. Of those you have named only Jamnalalji* came near, but only near, it. *A trustee has no heir*

* Gandhi maintained that if every wealthy person tried to become like Jamnalal Bajaj, economic equality would not be a far-off dream. See *To a Gandhian Capitalist*—Correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and Jamnalal Bajaj and the members of his family. Edited by Kaka Kalelkar, Jamnalal Trust, Wardha, 1951.

but the public. In a State built on the basis of non-violence, the commission of trustees will be regulated. Princes and zamindars will be on a par with other men of wealth."⁹⁴ (emphasis added)

On Inheritance

The question of inheritance is vital for any scheme of socio-economic reconstruction. As we have observed earlier, Gandhi was aware of the 'indigenous interests' who live on 'the blood of the masses'. It was this realization which impelled him to advise the Congress ministries (1937) to tax the rich heavily.

To quote him: "Riches have not yet been sufficiently taxed. In this of all countries in the world possession of inordinate wealth by individuals should be held as a crime against Indian humanity. Therefore the maximum limit of taxation of riches beyond a certain margin can never be reached. In England, I understand, they have already gone as far as 70% of the earnings beyond a prescribed figure. Why should there not be death duties? These sons of millionaires who are of age and yet inherit their parents' wealth are losers for the very inheritance. The nation thus becomes a double loser. *For the inheritance should rightly belong to the nation.* And the nation loses again in that the full faculties of the heirs are not drawn out, being crushed under the load of riches."⁹⁵ (emphasis added)

The following extracts from Gandhi's later writings will throw a new focus on his views developed in course of his growing experience.

"Q. How would the successor of a trustee be determined? Will he only have the right of proposing a name, the right of finalization being vested in the State?

A. As he had said yesterday, choice should be given to the original owner who became the first trustee, but *the choice must be finalized by the State.* Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as the individual. (emphasis added)

Q. When the replacement of private by public property thus takes place through the operation of the theory of trusteeship, will the ownership vest in the State, which is an instrument

of violence, or in associations of a voluntary character like village communes and municipalities, which may, of course, derive their final authority from State-made laws ?

A. That question involved some confusion of thought. Legal ownership in the transformed condition was vested in the trustee, not in the State. *It was in order to avoid confiscation that the doctrine of trusteeship came into play*, retaining for society the ability of the original owner in his own right. (emphasis added)

"Nor did he, the speaker, hold that the State must always be based on violence. It might be so in theory, but the practice of the theory demanded a State which would for the most part be based on non-violence."⁹⁶

"Q. You have asked rich men to be trustees. Is it implied that they should give up private ownership in their property and create out of it a trust valid in the eyes of law and managed democratically ? How will the successor of the present incumbent be determined on his demise ?

A. In answer Gandhiji said that he adhered to the position taken by him years ago that everything belonged to God and was from God. Therefore it was for His people as a whole, not for a particular individual. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion he became a trustee of that portion for God's people.

"God who was all-powerful had no need to store. He created from day to day, hence men also should in theory live from day to day and not stock things. If this truth was imbibed by the people generally, it would become legalized and trusteeship would become a legalized institution. He wished it became a gift from India to the world. Then there would be no exploitation and no reserves as in Australia and other countries for White men and their posterity. In these distinctions lay the seeds of a war more virulent than the last two. As to the successor, the trustee in office would have the right to nominate his successor subject to legal sanction."⁹⁷

"To the landlords he said that if what was said against them was true, he would warn them that their days were numbered.

They could no longer continue as lords and masters. They had a bright future if they became the trustees of the poor *kisans*. He had in mind not trustees in name but in reality. Such trustees would take nothing for themselves that their labour and care did not entitle them to. Then they would find that no law would be able to touch them. The *kisans* would be their friends."⁹⁸

"Q. You say that a *Raja*, a zamindar or a capitalist should be a trustee for the poor. Do you think that any such exist today ? Or do you expect them to be so transformed ?

A. I think that some very exist even today, though not in the full sense of the term. They are certainly moving in that direction. It can, however, be asked whether the present *Rajas* and others can be expected to become trustees of the poor. If they do not become trustees of their own accord, force of circumstances will compel the reform unless they court utter destruction. When *Panchayat Raj* is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the *zamindars*, the capitalists and the *Rajas* can hold sway only so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-co-operate with the evil of *zamindari* or capitalism, it must die of inanition. In *Panchayat Raj* only the *Panchayat* will be obeyed and the *Panchayat* can only work through the laws of their making."⁹⁹

On Talents

Gandhi provided the answer to the problem of recurring inequalities—the reference here is to the inherent inequality amongst men—arising from 'residuary ownership'. He wished talents to be fostered and held in trust to be used in the interest of society.

In 1942 he wrote: "Every individual must have the fullest liberty to use his talents consistently with equal use by his neighbours, but no one is entitled to the arbitrary use of the gains from the talents. He is part of the nation or say the social structure surrounding him. Therefore he can use his talents not for self only but for the structure of which he is but a part and on whose sufferance he lives."¹⁰⁰

We have quoted at fair length Gandhi's exposition of the doctrine of trusteeship. We will conclude this section with a practical trusteeship formula the draft of which was prepared by Prof. M. L. Dantwala and was placed before Gandhi, who made a few changes in it. The final draft reads as follows :

1. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.

2. It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.

3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.

4. Thus under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interests of society.

5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that would be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.

6. Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.¹⁰¹

A study of the Gandhian theory of trusteeship suggests that it rests on certain basic assumptions. It is in terms of his basic approach of non-violence, that is, conversion, that the significance of the theory is to be understood. This theory, because of its importance, demands a fuller discussion. Opinions as to the efficacy of trusteeship as a means of effecting social transformation are sharply divided. But one point must needs be stressed upon at this stage. A study of

the evolution of his trusteeship concept proves to the hilt that "with the passage of time Gandhi went on adding an economic and sociological content into the rather moralistic conception of trusteeship."¹⁰²

Appraisal of the doctrine

A brief survey of opinions held on Gandhi's theory of trusteeship may be added here.

Prof. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, in a passing reference in his *Modern Islam in India*, maintains that the trust theory of property proffered by some Muslim interpreters of Islam is identical with that held by Gandhi.¹⁰³

The theory of trusteeship has been generally objected to on the ground that as a means of effecting social transformation this theory, its ethical content notwithstanding, is ineffective. Trusteeship implies, according to this opinion, class collaboration or class harmony.

Here is a Marxist appraisal of the doctrine : "The division of society into the property-owning and the property-less classes, which is the characteristic of capitalism is sought to be retained in Gandhism also. The only difference in Gandhism is that the erstwhile capitalist, property-owning class will consider itself trustee on behalf of the proletariat. The change is purely in the subjective sphere, the objective conditions of production will continue by remaining as they were in capitalism. Production will continue by unplanned private competition among the individual trustees. These conditions of production have a compelling logic of their own which lead to the same contradictions as are witnessed under capitalism today. The class appropriation of surplus value, which trust productions will continue in a pious guise, will mean larger and larger accumulations of the capital on the one hand and pauperization of the masses on the other... These evils cannot be banished by wishing a change in the hearts and minds of the owners of property."¹⁰⁴

Or, as Prof. Hiren Mukerjee, in his study *Gandhiji*, makes out : "This apostle of pity wanted a sea-change in human relationships, but he had a great deal more than the convinced

conservative's patience in bringing about change ; he was ready to be gentle even with flagrantly self-seeking and basically anti-social vested interests ; and in his pre-occupation with the right kind of means for social change, he would make compromises and concessions to the 'status quo' which were often paradoxical, and in their implications, as in the idea of the rich being 'trustees' of the poor, positively pernicious."¹⁰⁵

Referring to the 'Utopian' socialists like Robert Owen, Saint-Simon and Fourier, he added : "Social transformation by moral suasion which changes the hardest of hearts and by making sure of individual self-reformation guarantees the quality of the transformation, is thus not an exclusively Gandhian contribution to social thought. It has its merits, no doubt, but history has shown repeatedly that when projected into a practical 'social perspective', it tends to become impractical. Not to recognise its limitations and to harp on it as the only remedy of society's ills is to take deceptive moral unction to one's soul and to put on a mantle of myth as a safeguard against the chilling blasts of real life problems."¹⁰⁶

Referring to Christ, Buddha and Gandhi, C. G. Shah, a Marxist theoretician, observes : "The survey of all history decisively proves that this technique of liquidating poverty and economic disparities rampant in the social world has decisively failed."¹⁰⁷

But criticism of this theory has not been levelled only from the Marxist quarters. Even a very sympathetic reviewer of Gandhian economics like Prof. J. J. Anjaria doubts its validity as a long-term solution.

To quote him : "As a short term measure, this is excellent. Coercion is ethically bad ; on any large scale, it is also not expedient. But the run away from the problem by merely appealing to the more fortunate ones to show a little more charity—awful word—is no solution."¹⁰⁸

Dr. T. K. N. Unnithan, in his *Gandhi and Free India*, observes : "Gandhi does not question the historical existence of the institution of the rich as such, though he questions the nature of its working and envisages a future possibility of

its complete elimination. This probably is due to his passionate desire to give effect to his cherished doctrine of non-violence. It is unlikely that Gandhi sought to justify the historical growth of the institution of wealth; the probability is that he ignored it or tolerated it as a result of his conviction that any attempts to question it would result in violence. Therefore, even if the trusteeship concept did involve an element of coercion or injustice towards the poor, this must be regarded as unavoidable. Further, he believed that the building up of a non-violent society in the future is not possible if the foundations are not non-violent, and from this point of view also he found it expedient to grant such concessions. To simplify matters he presumed honesty on the part of the trustees."¹⁰⁹

Gunnar Myrdal, who calls Gandhi 'a radical liberal', maintains that "The trusteeship idea is fundamentally a concept that fits into a paternalistic, feudal, pre-democratic society. It is so flexible that it can serve as a justification for inequality. Possibly Gandhi realized this, for he demanded a moral revolution, a change of heart among the rich. But in the real world such a revolution is unlikely and the trusteeship idea is nought but a vision of society where the rich are charitable so that the poor can remain weak. ...by his stress on the principle of trusteeship, and his friendliness toward many in exalted economic positions, he established a pattern of radicalism in talk but conservatism in action that is still very much a part of the Indian scene."¹¹⁰

Jawaharal Nehru wrote: "Again I think of the paradox that is Gandhiji. With all his keen intellect and passion for bettering the downtrodden and oppressed, why does he support a system, and a system which is obviously decaying, which creates this misery and waste? He seeks a way out, it is true, but is not that way to the past barred and bolted? And meanwhile he blesses all the relics of the old order which stand as obstacles in the way of advance—the feudal states, the big *zamindaris* and *taluqdaris*, the present capitalist system. Is it reasonable to believe in the theory of trusteeship—

to give unchecked power and wealth to an individual and to expect him to use it entirely for the public good? Are the best of us so perfect as to be trusted in this way? ...And is it good for the others to have even these benevolent supermen over them?"¹¹¹

Prof. N. K. Bose, in his *Studies*, refutes the charge that the Gandhian theory of trusteeship is another name for class collaboration: "...apart from its wider idealistic application, even within the sphere of economic life, the Gandhian theory of trusteeship does not make for class collaboration but for class liquidation, as a friend of mine once very happily put it. This liquidation, which will result in all men turning into labourers and placing their mental and material resources at the service of humanity taken as a whole, will be effected not by the forceful regimentation of the exploiters by the exploited, but by a change of heart brought about among the exploiters by the non-violent non-co-operation of those on whom the former depend for the making, the retention and the employment of their wealth. In course of that struggle, the exploited will also become free from the weaknesses which have given rise to the present social inequalities. Under the new constitution of things brought into being by the joint endeavour of today's hostile classes, all men will live as servants of the community, willingly and joyfully, through a complete reorientation of life's values in a new direction. Through economic equality, society will also, in its turn, secure for every man full opportunity for the development of his physical, mental and moral powers without allowing him to restrict similar opportunity in others. And the product of those talents will be shared by all in common."¹¹²

Prof. Amlan Datta contends Prof. Bose's interpretation. To quote him: "Prof. Bose, in his *Studies in Gandhism*, suggests that Gandhiji was wedded not to the theory of class-collaboration, but to the theory of peaceful and voluntary class-liquidation. This seems to be a representation of Gandhism as better than what it really is. A theory which cannot

envisage a new order in which landlordism will be not simply purified, but will be quite out of place is by no means a complete theory of the liquidation of the landlord class. In actual practice the Gandhian theory lends itself to being employed as a shield against any movement for overthrowing the dominant classes in existing society."¹¹³

In his exposition of the Gandhian doctrine of trusteeship, Prof. Dantwala observes: "One may or may not believe in the efficiency or practicability of this method of bringing about a revolutionary change, but one can understand why in the Gandhian scheme of society there is no reliance on the power and authority of the State for ushering changes or for preserving the New Order."¹¹⁴

Reflections

It is true that Gandhi moved a long way and his theory of trusteeship, as it evolved in course of time, stood for the abolition of inheritance. Prof. N. K. Bose argues that if inheritance "is done away with, then the main pillar upon which the formation of a propertied class rests will also disappear."¹¹⁵

A Marxist, or, for that matter, any close student of the laws of capitalism, will certainly object to such an interpretation of the functions and the inherent logic of private property. A historical parallel may be cited in order to have a clearer understanding of the problem.

In the Council meeting of the First International (1869), Bakunin brought forward a proposal relating to the abolition of inheritance. The General Council pointed out that the right of inheritance was the consequence and not the *cause* of the economic system, that its abolition could only follow on the general transformation of society with the abolition of private ownership in the means of production. The aim should be to abolish the institution which gave the few the power to appropriate the fruits of labour of the many. So the Bakuninian concept of the abolition of inheritance would prove false in theory and reactionary in practice.¹¹⁶

Thus it is seen that Gandhi's position, as interpreted by Prof. Bose, was identical with that of Bakunin—not with that of Marx. But, then, Gandhi was not a true Bakunist either, since he did not share the Russian anarchist's views on God, State, etc.

As to the argument that trusteeship will help in the process of humanization of social relationship, it may be submitted that the socialization of property is the basic pre-condition for such transformation to take place in reality. Humanism is an empty concept so long as class divisions persist. And they can only be ended by a revolutionary struggle of the disinherited with the aim of abolishing private ownership in the means of production. But Gandhi would not tend to agree with this aim.¹¹⁷

To sum up, the Gandhian theory of trusteeship is based on certain fundamental assumptions. The coherence and completeness of theory convinces anybody so long as its premises are accepted. It is not altogether impossible to understand Gandhi's position from his own point of view. But once those assumptions are challenged this theory loses all its logic.

Economic equality

The glaring economic inequalities of the society leading to the concentration of capital in the hands of a few naturally evoked Gandhi's condemnation. This state of inequality was morally degrading and economically untenable for him. As we have observed earlier (p. 204 *supra*), Gandhi in 1904 drew the lesson from Ruskin that a 'lawyer's work has the same value as a barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work'. We have seen that what Ruskin did preach was not equality of wages but fixed wages. But Gandhi understood Ruskin as advocating equality of wages. Whether Gandhi's understanding of Ruskin is correct or not is another matter. What is important is that the concept of equality of wages tallied with the general texture of his thinking.

A man of practical affairs, Gandhi began to feel in his encounter with real life that equality of wages or the ideal of

equal distribution of wealth would not be acceptable to the nation at the stage. As he wrote: "My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see it is not to be realized. I therefore work for equitable distribution."¹¹⁸

Although economic equality remained an ideal with him, he was prepared to allow a man of intellect to earn more. He would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the state (he, it seems, meant the community in this context), just as the income of all earning sons of the father go to the common family fund.¹¹⁹ (for the extract of his speech, see p. 227 *supra*.)

For Gandhi, economic equality is the master-key to non-violent independence. In an article 'Implications of Constructive Programme', he observed: "The whole of this programme will, however, be a structure on sand if it is not built on the solid foundation of economic equality. Economic equality must never be supposed to mean possession of an equal amount of worldly goods by every one. It does mean, however, that every one will have a proper house to live in, sufficient and balanced food to eat, and sufficient khadi with which to cover himself. It also means that cruel inequality that obtains today will be removed by purely non-violent means."¹²⁰

Or, as he explained in his *Constructive Programme*: "Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and a levelling up of the semi-starved, naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day, unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good."¹²¹

How is the ideal of equal distribution to be realized ? What did Gandhi envisage ?

"The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. ...To bring this ideal into being the entire social order has got to be reconstructed. A society based on non-violence cannot nurture any other ideal. We may not perhaps be able to realize the goal, but we must bear it in mind and work unceasingly to near it. To the same extent as we progress towards our goal we shall find contentment and happiness, and to that extent too shall we have contributed towards the bringing into being of a non-violent society.

"It is perfectly possible for an individual to adopt this way of life without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can observe a certain rule of conduct, it follows that a group of individuals can do likewise. It is necessary for me to emphasize the fact that no one need wait for anyone else in order to adopt a right course. Men generally hesitate to make a beginning if they feel that the objective cannot be had in its entirety. Such an attitude of mind is in reality a bar to progress.

"Now let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about through non-violence. The first step towards it is for him who has made this ideal part of his being about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earnings would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of life. There would be self-restraint exercised in every sphere of life. When he has done all that is possible in his own life, then only will he be in a position to preach this ideal among his associates and neighbours.

"Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them."¹²²

On January 29, 1946 he was asked some questions in the Constructive Workers' Conference at Madras. One of the questions related to what exactly Gandhi meant by economic equality.

"Gandhiji's reply was that economic equality of his conception did not mean that everyone would literally have the same amount. It simply meant that everybody should have enough for his or her needs. For instance...the elephant needs a thousand times more food than the ant, but that is not an indication of inequality. So the real meaning of economic equality was : 'To each according to his need.' That was the definition of Marx. If a single man demanded as much as a man with wife and four children, then that would be a violation of economic equality.

"Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper, by saying that the former need more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument. The contrast between the rich and the poor today is a painful sight. The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign government and also by their own countrymen—the city dwellers. They produce the food and go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it. It is disgraceful. Everyone must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief. He did not want to taboo everything above and beyond the bare necessities, but they must come after the essential needs of the poor are satisfied. First things must come first."¹²³

But, then, what is the difference between Gandhi's technique and that of the communists or socialists for realizing the goal of economic equality ?

"The Socialists and the Communists say they can do nothing to bring about economic equality today. They will just carry on propaganda in its favour and to that end they believe in generating and accentuating hatred. They say, when they get control over the State, they will enforce equality. Under my plan, the State will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate to them or force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not

wait till I have converted the whole society to my view but will straight away make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about economic equality of my conception, if I am the owner of fifty motor cars or even of ten *bighas* of land. For that I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. That is what I have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so, I claim to be a foremost Communist although I make use of cars and other facilities offered to me by the rich. They have no hold on me and I can shed them at a moment's notice, if the interests of the masses demand it."¹²⁴

We have seen that Gandhi while pleading for equal distribution accepted equitable distribution as a practical goal. But this does not mean that he resiled from his original position of equal distribution. That he only recognized the reality and toned down his practical goal while at the same time clinging to his ideal, would be evident from the following :

"Q. Do you hold that all persons who perform useful and necessary service in society, whether farmer or *bhangi*, engineer or accountant, doctor or teacher, have a moral right only to equal wages with the rest ? Of course, it is understood, educational or other expenses shall be a charge of the State. Our question is, should not all persons get the same wages for their personal needs ? Do you think that if we work for this equality, it will cut sooner under the root of untouchability than any other process ?

A. As to this Gandhiji had no doubt that if India was to live an exemplary life of independence which would be the envy of the world, all the *bhangis*, doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work. Indian society may never reach the goal but it was the duty of every Indian to set his sail towards that goal and no other if India was to be a happy land."¹²⁵

Gandhi's concept of economic equality was not in terms of absolute equality so far as his practical goal was concerned. Equal payment of wages that he advocated as an ideal to be pursued may be logically derived from the basic tenets of

Christian Socialism. George Bernard Shaw, it may be noted in this connexion, was an ardent advocate of equality of wages. Marx's concept 'to each according to his needs' appealed to Gandhi because, so it seems to us, of its humanist essence. Distribution according to needs is introduced under communism (the higher phase of socialism). It takes place owing to a direct economic necessity which arises at this high stage in the development of social production. In the socialist society (the lower phase), material and cultural values are distributed in accordance with the quantity and quality of labour expended by each worker in social production. Equalization of wages is not economically tenable at this stage. Gandhi, unlike Marx, did not care to distinguish between the stages of society in terms of labour productivity; he set before himself the ideal and strove for it taking into account the practical obstacles that stood in the way and prescribed such measures that could be realized in the immediate context. One may construct the interpretation that while Svarāj was an immediate goal for Gandhi, Rāma Rāj was the ultimate ideal. In this connexion, Dr. V. P. Varma states: "Gandhi does not clarify whether he wanted payment according to needs for the first stage, that is Swaraj or for the highest ideal of society, that is Ramraj. It is possible to hold that he wanted the application of this formula for Ramraj. In Swaraj, however, Gandhi would like the elimination of all forms of economic exploitation through non-coercive technics."¹²⁶

Evolution of views on Socialism

We have seen above Gandhi's views on class inequalities and the means he suggested for effecting reconstruction of the social order. The statements have shown that Gandhi moved with the time and responded to the challenge of inequality in his own way. Here we find a man growing, developing, moving and making the masses move with him for the realization of a new society, as he envisaged it, free from exploitation. This may be further exemplified from his views on socialism (some of the important pronounce-

ments wherein his basic stand had been clarified have been given above).

In 1916 he said : "I am no socialist and I do not want to dispossess those who have got possessions : but I do say that, personally, those of us who want to see light out of darkness have to follow this rule. I do not want to dispossess anybody. I should then be departing from the rule of *Ahimsa*."¹²⁷

As we have seen in a previous section (sec. on Evolution of views on industrialism and machinery), in 1924 he admitted the necessity of nationalization or state control. Though that was a guarded approval of socialism, yet a clear advance from his earlier position is evident.

He was no dogmatist to remain stuck to an earlier proposition even when the later situation demanded of him the contrary. He thus moved away from his earlier idea of dispossession which was repugnant to him in 1916. In a speech¹²⁸ before the forty-ninth meeting of the Federal Structure Committee of the Round Table Conference held on November 19, 1931, he gave a picture of how things were to shape themselves if a national government was to come into being in India. His association with the indigenous capitalists did not prevent him from taking the side of the poor and press the views of the common men. He supported the Indian capitalists' opposition to the financial safeguards and the Government's currency policy, and spoke strongly against the British representatives on commercial discrimination. He agreed that there must be no racial discrimination but the national government would have to discriminate in favour of the poor against the rich. Not only the government obligations, he proceeded, but "existing interest should be subject to judicial scrutiny when necessary." His formula was meant to be applied to the Indians equally. "If they have obtained concessions...because they did some service to the officials of the days and got some miles of land, well, if I had the possession of the Government I would quickly dispossess them." Referring to the representatives of the moneyed men, he declared : "... they are not representative of those who lack even a place

to sleep and have not even a crust of bread to eat. If the National Government comes to the conclusion that that place [i.e. the palatial buildings of 'this white elephant which is called New Delhi'] is unnecessary, no matter what interests are concerned they will be dispossessed, and they will be dispossessed I may tell you, without any compensation, because if you want this Government to pay compensation it will have to rob Peter to pay Paul, and that would be impossible."

On the same occasion, while he did not go to the length of advocating in full throat the state control of key industries, he had been seen to be moving slowly but steadily from his earlier position. In the Round Table Conference he said: "The Congress conception is that if the key industries are not taken over by the State itself, the State will at least have a predominant say in the conduct and administration and development of the key industries."

It was only after 1934 when the ideas of a substantial section of Congressmen and of the educated public in general turned for the first time towards socialism, that he also began to call himself a socialist.

P. Spratt, after noting this evolution of his ideas towards socialism, observes: "There is no insincerity or mere vulgar opportunism in this. It is due to his sensitiveness to the feelings and thought of the community, and his direct response, unhampered by any rigid theories of his own, to the 'moral atmosphere' about him."¹²⁹

In the wake of suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement by Gandhi in 1933 there emerged the Congress Socialist group. At the first Congress Socialist Conference, held at Patna in 1934, the programme of the Party was formulated. After the publication of the programme an attempt was made by some of the leaders of CSP to ascertain Gandhi's views on it.¹³⁰ The detailed discussion that followed brings out in sharp relief his views on socialism.

"Q.: What is your attitude towards socialism ?

A.: I call myself a socialist. I love the very word, but I will not preach the same socialism as most socialists do.

Q. : Are your objections to scientific socialism as understood in the West, fundamental objections in principle, or are they only objections to its applications in India ?

A. : I do not know what scientific socialism is. I have not read any books on it. But if the socialist programmes I have seen represented, I think, it is not applicable in that form to this country.

Q. : Do you agree with the socialist ideal of the nationalization of all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange ?

A. : I believe in the nationalization of key and principal industries as is laid down in the resolution of the Karachi Congress. More than that I cannot at present visualize. Nor do I want all the means of production to be nationalized. Is even Rabindranath Tagore to be nationalized ? These are day dreams.

Q. : For the landlords, don't you think coercion is necessary ?

A. : You must convert both landlords and the landless. It is easier to convert the former than the latter, for with landlords it is only a question of economic interest, whereas with the landless it is a matter of relation. It is no use getting angry with the landlords. They also deserve our pity, for it is the land that is eating them up. So many American millionaires have come to me and asked me how they can find happiness.

Q. : Are you not talking in terms of individuals while socialists think in terms of classes ?

A. But what is after all a class ? It is an aggregate of individuals. You cannot convert landlords and capitalists by violence but only by persuasion. We can tell them that they are entitled to amass wealth, but they cannot spend it in any manner they choose. They must become trustees of their own wealth. 'You have the capacity to make money', I would tell them, 'for that you will be allowed to take a commission for yourselves. But you must abandon unfair means.' I would see by what means they amass wealth. If it is ill-gotten

I would take it away. At the Round Table Conference I caused consternation to people like Sir Cowasji Jehangir by saying, I would examine every title-deed of property.

Q. : Is that not quite impracticable ? How can you go through millions of cases of property holders ?

A. : I would take the cases of ten such landlords and capitalists as sample cases and if the decision was adverse the rest would relinquish their claims themselves.

Q. : Don't you recognize the conflict of interest between the possessing and the exploited classes resulting in a class struggle ?

A. : Today there is a conflict of interest between the capitalist and the worker because the former dreams of profits of lakhs of rupees without giving anything to the worker. I would stop the capitalists from doing so. I have told particularly in Ahmedabad, that they must regard the workers as partners. I say to them : 'You bring your capital into the concern, they bring their only capital—their persons.' When the Ahmedabad mill-owners came to me for a wage-cut, I told them : 'It is true you have a right to your interest, but first you must guarantee the men's wages.'

Q. : But socialists deny the very right to draw interest.

A. : But won't they reward brains ?

Q. : Are you contemplating the perpetuation of private enterprise and free competition or planned economy by the State ?

A. : I believe in private enterprise and also in planned production. If you have only State production, men will become moral and intellectual paupers. They will forget their responsibilities. I would therefore allow the capitalist and the zamindar to keep their factory and their land, but I would make them consider themselves trustees of their property.

Q. : How will you do it ?

A. : By non-violence. I would make them undergo a change of heart. It is possible to convert them.

Q. : Will you adopt economic pressure as a means of conversion ?

A. : Yes, but it must be non-violent.

Q. : Non-violent in the sense of not shedding blood ?

A. : Once socialists accept non-violence, they must accept me as the expert on non-violence. But I believe in legislation. There is an element of coercion in it ; but that cannot be helped.

Q. : On what basis would you like peasants and workers to be organized ?

A. : With the idea of improving their position and redressing their grievances. What I object to is their being used for political purposes. For instance, it may be that my efforts for the Harijans may result in their supporting the national struggle but that is not why I am fighting for them. That motive is not even present in my mind. Similarly socialists should not organize workers with the idea of using them against British Imperialism. That is why I do not feel happy about the Bombay textile strike. I have an idea, it is called and led by people to gain political power for themselves.

Q. : Do you think it is wrong to tell the workers that what they are really fighting is the system of imperialism and that so long as that system remains their conditions cannot improve ?

A. : Yes. At present the workers should only be taught to impose their will on the mill-owners. To bring in the Government also is to overprove your case. Whatever State there is even your own Capitalistic Government will support the mill-owners. Even under this system I can teach labour to use its power and to claim partnership with capital. I would ask them to take possession of the mills.

Q. : But so long as the Imperialist Government is there that is impossible.

A. : Even without control of the State there can be nationalization. I can start a mill for the benefit of the workers."

Gandhi's advice to the socialists asking them not to organize the workers with the idea of using them against British imperialism should not be construed to mean that he was against the workers' participation in the anti-imperialist movement. He objected to their 'being used'. He might have thought, as per his assessment of the maturity and organization of the workers,

that giving a call to the workers at an inopportune moment, instead of helping, might harm the cause. For in the latter part of the interview referred to above we read :

Q. : Should not war be resisted by general strike of railwaymen, dockers, telegraphists and munition workers ?

A : Yes. There should be strike when war breaks out, but we should not declare our intentions from now.

Similarly, in an interview to an American correspondent on August 8, 1942, he categorically stated that the general strike was not outside his contemplation. He said : "if a general strike becomes a dire necessity, I shall not flinch."¹³¹

Picture of Socialism

He had his own picture of socialism. In 1934 he said : "The socialism that India can assimilate is the socialism of the spinning wheel."¹³²

He developed his concept of socialism when he was confronted with the growing influence of scientific socialism. The whole country was surcharged with socialist slogans. Even the platform of the Indian National Congress was utilized to voice the urges of the newly emerging socialist forces. Jawaharlal's advocacy of socialism in 'the scientific, economic sense' (Presidential Address to the National Congress, Lucknow, April, 1936), as 'the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems'¹³³ strengthened, in a limited sense, the forces of socialism. At the Faizpur Congress (December, 1936) the same fervour was noticeable. Gandhi took no part in the Congress debates but his speech delivered at the Exhibition Grounds on December 27 was significant. From this speech we get an idea of how his concept of socialism was evolved.

"Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught : 'All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line ? Man is the maker of that line and he can, therefore, unmake it.' Gopal literally means shepherd ; it also means God. In modern language it means the State, i.e., the people. That the land today does not

belong to the people is true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it. I have no doubt that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible for any nation, not excluding Russia, and that without violence. The most effective substitute for violent dispossession is the wheel with all its implications. Land and all property is his who will work for it. Unfortunately the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this simple fact."¹⁸⁴

His concept of socialism was entirely his own in the sense that socialism did not represent itself to him as a necessary and logical stage in social evolution growing out of the technological basis and production relations of capitalism. As he said: "Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital by capitalists. As I have contended, socialism, even communism, is explicit in the first verse of *Ishopanishad*. What is true is that when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversion, the technique of what is known as scientific socialism was born. I am engaged in solving the same problem that faces scientific socialists. It is true, however, that my approach is always and only through unadulterated non-violence. It may fail. If it does, it will be because of my ignorance of the technique of non-violence. I may be a bad exponent of the doctrine in which my faith is daily increasing."¹⁸⁵

In 1937 Gandhi, in reply to a question by an Egyptian interviewer, told that he was a believer in non-violent communism. He added: "If Communism came without any violence, it would be welcome. For then no property would be held by anybody except on behalf of the people and for the people. A millionaire may have his millions, but he will hold them for the people. The State could take charge of them whenever they would need them for the common cause."¹⁸⁶

It was not out of any theoretical study or critical-intellectual analysis of the social development of history that Gandhi arrived at his socialism. That socialism came naturally to him would be clear from the account as follows.

Having felt the necessity for a clearer outline of the picture of future India, Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, the then CSP leader, made an attempt to draw a picture of Swaraj,^{137*} which was meant to be a draft resolution for consideration by the Ramgarh Congress (1940).

Gandhi while publishing 'Jayaprakash's Picture' in *Harijan* (20.4.40, p. 96) commented :

"As an ideal to be reduced to practice as soon as possible after India comes into her own, I endorse in general all except one of the propositions enunciated by Shri Jayaprakash." [the reference is made here to J. P.'s proposition about the princes.]

"I have claimed that I was a socialist long before those I know in India had avowed their creed. But my socialism was *natural* to me and not adopted from any books. It came out of my unshakable belief in non-violence. No man could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustice, no matter where it occurred. Unfortunately Western socialists have, so far as I know, believed in the necessity of violence for enforcing socialist doctrines. (emphasis added)

* "The political and economic organization of the State shall be based on principles of social justice and economic freedom. While this organization shall conduce to the satisfaction of the national requirements of every member of society, material satisfaction shall not be its sole objective. It shall aim at healthy living and the moral and intellectual development of the individual. To this end to secure social justice, the State shall endeavour to promote small-scale production carried on by individual or co-operative effort for the equal benefit of all concerned. All large-scale collective production shall be eventually brought under collective ownership and control, and in this behalf the State shall begin by nationalizing heavy transport, shipping, mining and the heavy industries. The textile industry shall be progressively decentralized.

"The life of the villages shall be reorganized and the villages shall be made self-governing units, self-sufficient in as large a measure as possible. The land laws of the country shall be drastically reformed on the principle that land shall belong to the actual cultivator alone, and that no cultivator shall have more land than is necessary to support his family on a fair standard of living. This will end the various systems of landlordism on the one hand and farm bondage on the other.

"The State shall protect the interests of the classes, but when these impinge upon the interests of those who have been poor and downtrodden, it shall defend the latter and thus restore the balance of social justice.

"In all State-managed enterprises, the workers shall be represented through their elected representatives and shall have an equal share in it with the representatives of the Government."

"I have always held that social justice, even unto the least and the lowliest, is impossible of attainment by force. I have further believed that it is possible by further training of the lowliest by non-violent means to secure redress of the wrongs suffered by them. That means is non-violent non-co-operation."

Similarly, in 1934 he wrote : "Socialism and communism of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours. ...Our socialism or communism should be based on non-violence and on harmonious co-operation of labour and capital, landlord and tenant."¹⁸⁸

A sharp orientation of his thinking took place round about 1942. We have seen above that during early 1942 he had his visions that the rule of the poor would be established (the passage has been quoted in p. 230 *supra*). We find Gandhi advocating at this period the idea of collective or co-operative (he did not distinguish between the two) ownership. In an article in *Harijan* (15.2.42, p.39) he formulated his opinions on the subject in the following terms :

"The world today is moving towards the ideal of collective or co-operative effort in every department of life. Much in this line has been and is being accomplished. It has come into our country also, but in such a distorted form that our poor have not been able to reap its benefits. .. I firmly believe that we shall not derive the benefits of agriculture until we take to co-operative farming. ...And what applies to land applies equally to cattle."

The momentous Quit India Resolution of 1942—a product of Gandhi's bold imagination—contained the significant declaration that the primary functions of the future independent government would be "to promote the well-being and progress of the workers in the fields and the factories." This may sound just a bourgeois-liberal phrase-mongering, but the continuation of the same sentence reads : "to whom all power and authority must belong."¹⁸⁹ While this is no straightway declaration of socialism, implications are to be read in this Resolution and it is certainly an advance from the earlier

position of the Congress. If any single individual is to be credited for giving a new orientation to the Congress, it is undoubtedly Gandhi.

During his detention in the Aga Khan Palace (1942-4) he read for the first time, at the age of seventy-four, Karl Marx's first volume of *Capital*. He also read Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Gandhi did not care whether Marxism was right or wrong. "All I know is that the poor are being crushed. Something has got to be done for them. To me this is axiomatic."¹⁴⁰ Moral indignation against acquisitiveness was the axiology of socialism for him.

In 1946, in a discussion with Louis Fischer, Gandhi declared that he was a socialist before many of the Indian socialists were born. When asked to explain the meaning of his socialism, Gandhi replied :

"My socialism means 'even unto this last'. I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. In their socialism, probably, these have no place. Their one aim is material progress. For instance, America aims at having a car for every citizen. I do not. I want freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body."

Continuing, he said :

"I call myself a communist also.

"My communism is not very different from socialism. It is a harmonious blending of the two. Communism, as I have understood it, is a natural corollary of socialism."¹⁴¹

Speaking before the Delhi Provincial Political Conference on July 2, 1947, Gandhi declared himself to be a socialist.¹⁴²

"Nearly fifty years ago", Gandhi went on, "when I was practising law in South Africa, many people used to call themselves socialists. But they were less of socialists than I was. I used to work among the labourers. I have made this part of my life's work. This is true socialism. I have always considered myself a true servant of the peasants and the workers.

...I am of the opinion that even a king can be a socialist by becoming a servant of the people."

His way was to make the ruler a socialist through love. Gandhi continued to say: "If socialism means befriending one's enemies I should be treated as a true socialist. This conception of socialism is my own. The socialists should learn socialism from me. Only then we can establish a true workers' and peasants' raj."

In an editorial in *Harijan* dated 13. 7. 47, p. 232, entitled 'Who is a Socialist?' he wrote:

"Socialism is a beautiful word and so far as I am aware in socialism all the members of society are equal—none low, none high. In the individual body, the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. This is socialism.

"In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and employee are all on the same level. In terms of religion there is no duality in socialism. It is all unity. ...

"Socialism begins with the first convert. ...

"This socialism is as pure as crystal. It, therefore, requires crystal-like means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalized by cutting off the prince's head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employed. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth.

"...only truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted socialists will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world. To my knowledge there is no country in the world which is purely socialist. Without the means described above the existence of such a society is impossible."

The next week *Harijan* (p. 240) carried another article on socialism by Gandhi.

"Truth and Ahimsa must incarnate in Socialism. ...It [satyagraha] is the highest and infallible means, the

greatest force. Socialism will not be reached by any other means."

Gandhian socialism : different interpretations

We have traced above the evolution of Gandhi's views on socialism. Interpretations differ as to the nature of his socialism vis-à-vis Marxian socialism. Some maintain that the difference between Marxian socialism and Gandhian socialism which is a variant of sarvodaya is not in relation to the ends but in relation to the means,* while some hold that the Gandhian concept of social reconstruction is essentially different from the other.**

Dr. Biman Bihari Majumdar in his paper on 'Gandhian Socialism'¹⁴³ mentions that Gandhi went much further than Proudhon as regards the concept of property and he finds some resemblance between the Gandhian approach and Christian Socialism. But, according to Dr. Majumdar, there are very important points of difference between Gandhian socialism and the Christian social movements. Generally, he continues, the different schools of Christian socialists are hostile to liberalism and individualism, whereas Gandhi was a staunch champion of the development of the personality of the individual. Again, the Christian socialists are in favour of the state intervention. But Gandhi was opposed to the concentration of wide powers in the hands of the state.

M. N. Roy, a trenchant critic of Gandhism, observed in one of his writings (written during 1936 detention): "The Christian Socialism of Charles Kingsley and his followers anticipated Gandhism by more than half a century. ...Gandhi denounces capitalism, but does not advocate its abolition. His avowed desire is to establish harmonious relations between the

* "The difference between Communism and Sarvodaya is not in the ends but in the means. Gandhiji himself more than once declared that he was a communist minus their violence."—K. G. Mashruwala, in M. K. Gandhi, *Sarvodaya*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1958, p. 168.

** "Vinoba Bhave observes: "The fact of the matter is that these two ideologies are irreconcilable; the differences between them are fundamental."—Introduction to K. G. Mashruwala, *Gandhi and Marx*, Navajivan, 1954, p. 17.

capitalists and the workers—to persuade the former to be benevolent guardians of the latter. ...the Mahatma cannot be looked upon as a greater enemy of capitalism than Disraeli. Both advocate giving the bitter pill a sugar-coating.”¹⁴⁴

P. Spratt in his analysis says of Gandhi: ‘His economic preferences are guided by two opposite repulsions: from capitalism as it exists, and from the great scale of economic organisation, and the consequent suppression of individual initiative which are expected to prevail under socialism. ...Mr. Gandhi thinks that a stable economic system of an intermediate type could be set up. But this is yet to be proved. It may be that the choice is between capitalism in more or less its traditional form, and some organisation which can be called socialism; and I venture to agree with Mr. Gandhi’s description of himself as a socialist because I think that of the two he would prefer the socialistic development and because his proposals, such as those for public or co-operative control of large-scale industries and services, would probably favour it’¹⁴⁵

According to Gunnar Myrdal, ‘Gandhi was anti-capitalistic in his suspicion of the machine age and ‘socialistic’ in his support of an uncomplicated brotherhood in economic affairs and greater equality.’¹⁴⁶

Prof. D. P. Mukerji in his paper on ‘Mahatma Gandhi’s Views on Machines and Technology’ observed that to the extent that Gandhi would institutionalize the concept of *aparigraha* in the state that would own, and not possess for greed or profit, he was a socialist or even a communist, “with this difference that his socialism did not grow out of industrial civilization, technological values, class conflict, or according to the operations of the laws of dialectics.”¹⁴⁷

This, in our opinion, brings out the essential point of difference between the assumptions of Gandhian socialism on the one hand and Marxian socialism on the other.

It is a cliché that there are as many brands of socialism as there are socialists. The moot question is: What do we mean by socialism, or how do we define socialism?

The Encyclopaedia of the Labour Movement gives the definition as follows :

"Socialism is a working class doctrine and movement aiming through the class struggle, at the collective control of society, by the capture of the state machine by the workers and the establishment of self-government in industry." (Vol. III, p. 154.)

Gandhian socialism is based on assumptions different from the five clauses that make up the above definition.

But socialism is not merely an economic doctrine, it is ethical too. As Albert Einstein said in his small but significant article, *Why Socialism?* : "It is directed towards a social-ethical end."¹⁴⁸

From the ethical point of view, as understood in a non-class sense, the Gandhian theory certainly passes the criterion of socialism. "His was a moral socialism", Louis Fischer commented.¹⁴⁹

P. K. Gopalakrishnan observes : "Gandhiji was a utopian socialist who was one with the socialists of other schools in their indictment of the system of private property, with its waste and social injustice, in the belief that the remedy for existing conditions was to be found in some form of social ownership of wealth and industry under which mutual aid would supplant competition as the law of social well-being. He also voiced the sentiment of all schools of socialism in their advocacy of a society which would afford each individual full opportunities for physical, intellectual and moral development; in the recognition of work as a necessity, and in their demand that all should participate therein, and in their insistence on the importance of removing inequality between classes."¹⁵⁰

This description is valid if the historical materialist method is accepted. This utopian element was the source of his strength as well as of his weakness. If socialism is defined in a broad (necessarily vague?) sense, as has been done by G. D. H. Cole ('A broad human movement on behalf of the bottom dog'), Gandhi could certainly be ranked as one of the foremost ethical or moral socialists and the champion of the disinherited.

Bread labour was both philosophy and economics to Gandhi. As is well known, he derived the concept of bread labour from Tolstoy and Ruskin. This concept is integrally related to his basic philosophy of life. It was one of the vows the observance of which was obligatory for the satyāgraha āśramites. The injunction of this law, which he called divine, upon every able-bodied person to perform at least that amount of *śārīra śrama*, body labour, which will produce the equivalent of what he consumes for physical sustenance, introduced a new element in the conventional mode of thinking as well as in the sphere of socio-economic thought. The significance of this doctrine will be clear when we acquaint ourselves with the fundamentals of the doctrine as propounded and elaborated by Gandhi on different occasions.

The following extract from *Yeravda Mandir* will give us an idea of how the concept of bread labour gripped his mind. This will further show that he believed that the doctrine had religious sanctions and that its practice would lead to the abolition of ranks in the society.

"The law, that to live man must work, first came home to me upon reading Tolstoy's writing on Bread labour. But even before that I had begun to pay homage to it after reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. The divine law, that man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands, was first stressed by a Russian writer named T. M. Bondaref. Tolstoy advertised it and gave it wider publicity. In my view the same principle has been set forth in the third chapter of the Gita, where we are told, that he who eats without offering sacrifice eats stolen food. Sacrifice here can only mean Bread labour.

"Reason too leads us to an identical conclusion. How can a man, who does not do body labour, have the right to eat? 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread', says the Bible. ...Again invidious distinctions of rank would be abolished, when everyone without exception acknowledged the obligation of Bread labour. It is common to all the *varnas*.

There is a world-wide conflict between capital and labour, and the poor envy the rich. If all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be obliterated ; the rich would still be there, but they would deem themselves only trustees of their property, and would use it mainly in the public interest.

"Bread labour is a veritable blessing to one who would observe Non-violence, worship Truth, and make the observance of *brahmacharya* a natural act. This labour can truly be related to agriculture alone. But at present at any rate, everybody is not in a position to take to it. A person can therefore spin or weave, or take up carpentry or smithery, instead of tilling the soil, always regarding agriculture however to be the ideal. Everyone must be his own scavenger. ...Scavenging, ...intelligently taken up, will help one to a true appreciation of the equality of man."¹⁵¹

What is the position of the intellectual vis-à-vis manual labour ? Can't men earn their bread by intellectual labour ? Gandhi's answer was an emphatic No. To quote him again :

"The needs of the body must be supplied by the body. 'Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's' perhaps applies here well.

"Mere mental, that is, intellectual labour is for the soul and is its own satisfaction. It should never demand payment. In the ideal State, doctors, lawyers and the like will work solely for the benefit of society, not for self. Obedience to the law of Bread labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for natural service. The law of the brute will be replaced by the law of man."¹⁵²

Similarly, he wrote in 1925 : "Let me not be misunderstood. I do not discount the value of intellectual labour, but no amount of it is any compensation for bodily labour which everyone of us is born to give for the common good of all. It may be, often is, infinitely superior to bodily labour, but it never is or can be a substitute for it, even as intellectual food though far superior to the grains we eat never can be a substitute for them. Indeed without the products of the earth, those of the intellect would be an impossibility."¹⁵³

He held fast to this opinion till he breathed his last, as would be evident from the following :

"Q. : Why should we insist on a Rabindranath or Raman earning his bread by manual labour ? Is it not sheer wastage ? Why should not brain workers be considered on a par with manual workers, for both of them perform useful social work ?

A. : Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist on is the necessity of physical labour. No man, I claim, ought to be free from that obligation. It will serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output. I venture to say that in ancient times, *brahmans* worked with their body as with their mind. But even if they did not, body labour was a proved necessity at the present time. In this connection I would refer to the life of Tolstoy and how he made famous the theory of Bread labour, first propounded in his country by the Russian peasant Bondaref."¹⁵⁴

And, "If everybody lived by the sweat of his brow, the earth would become a paradise. The question of the use of special talents hardly needed separate consideration. If everyone laboured physically for his bread, it followed that poets, doctors, lawyers, etc., would regard it their duty to use those talents gratis for the service of humanity. Their output will be all the better and richer for their selfless devotion to duty."¹⁵⁵

But he would not advocate compulsory obedience to the law of bread labour, for then it would breed poverty, disease and discontent. "It is a state of slavery" for Gandhi. What he wanted was willing obedience to this law as, in his opinion, it would, in the nature of things, bring contentment and health."¹⁵⁶

What about leisure which, as is claimed, is absolutely necessary for any intellectual-cultural-creative pursuit ? The answer depends on how one views the problem of work and leisure. Gandhi held :

"I am trying to deal with people who do not know what to do with their enforced leisure.

"Any work, however humdrum, which does not take away the joy of creating something, is not monotonous. ... I would

not mind being my own drawer of water and hewer of wood, provided I am doing the work intelligently and not because someone compels me to do so. All labour when done intelligently and to some high purpose becomes at once re-creation and recreation.

"My object is to put an end to inertia and lethargy."¹⁵⁷

"We know that those who get all that leisure—both the working and the intellectual classes—do not make the best use of it. In fact we too often find the idle mind being turned into the Devil's workshop.

"Physical labour by itself is not an education even as mental labour is not. It has been with our people deadly drudgery without their knowing this, and that deadens one's finer instincts. That is where I have my strongest complaint against the *savarna* Hindus. They have rendered work for the proletariat a task of hard drudgery, from which they have no pleasure and in which they have no interest. If they had been considered members of the society enjoying the same status as they, theirs would have been the proudest position in life. ... there is no doubt that we are where we are because we have long neglected the *Shoodras*. ... We have so debased our working classes that they cannot work and live naturally. If our people had laboured intelligently and with joy, we should have been quite different today."¹⁵⁸

Prof. N. K. Bose holds on this point: "No one can quarrel with an attempt to avoid reducible drudgery; but the attitude to work and leisure seems to have something wrong about it. The work which is essential for the life of man can be looked upon as sacred, and made capable of developing the personality of the worker. He will undoubtedly need some leisure to devote to work of free choice; but the consciousness that the moral bond of bread-labour unites him to the rest of mankind should uplift him and transform the labour which Nature imposes upon us with a heavy hand, into a creative endeavour capable of unfolding the deepest petals of our being. In this will lie the victory of man over nature."¹⁵⁹

Bread labour, as conceived by Gandhi, is a training in moral discipline as well as an economic answer to the enforced idleness of the millions of people. And "Intelligent Bread labour is any day the highest form of social service."¹⁶⁰ The importance given to manual labour is further illustrated by basic education.¹⁶¹

Referring to the 'revolutionary' significance of bread labour, Prof. D. P. Mukerji observed : "...*srama* or the value of the dignity of labour, was not quite an Indian value. In a hierarchical society, types of work are defined and relegated to different strata on the two assumptions : (1) that spiritual 'work,' that is, pure contemplation, is the highest type ; and (2) that each stratum, or caste, which is fixed by birth, has its own '*swadharma*' ('bond,' 'religion'), the practice of which means fulfilment of personality, and the departure of which means 'destruction' of self. But Gandhiji had a different conception of labour.

"The dissociation of body labour from mental and spiritual labour has had a long history, which Gandhiji did not take into account. His attitude towards what is known as the caste-system cannot be discussed here. But on this matter of bread-labour bringing about economic equality, he was anti-caste and, therefore, a revolutionary, almost a socialist. In other words, if the socialist gave up the usual western assumption, viz., no high technology, no socialism, and remained content with the use of certain special types of machinery, which would not displace labour, or exploit human beings for greed, or concentrate power, etc., then Gandhiji would bless him. If further, the socialist accepted this idea of bread-labour and would build on the revolutionary content of this view, viz., the ending of the separation of physical labour, now the only duty of a whole class of people who form the majority, from mental labour, now the monopoly of the few, then the difference between him and Gandhiji would not exist except in the matter of wantlessness. One could argue here that there was a danger in this concept of bread-labour, viz., the possibility of lowering the impulse and the level of intellectual work by making the intellectual workers work physically for bread without raising the

intellectual level and stimulating the impulse of physical workers. But Gandhiji would reply that it could be averted."¹⁶²

Dr. Joan V. Bondurant says : "There is perhaps no more telling an illustration of the inaccuracy of reading strict conservatism into Gandhi's approach than this suggestion about the use of manual labour. For beyond the explicit statement, there lay implicit in Gandhi's suggestion a potential anything but conservative—the undermining of caste itself."¹⁶³

The introduction of the concept of bread labour in a hierarchical, authoritarian, and closed society decidedly carried a progressive significance in that it cut at the roots of social distance institutionalized through the age-old caste system (see p. 191 *supra*). The reiteration of the principle 'He who shall work shall eat' is certainly to be commended especially where the drudgery of physical work has been as a matter of design imposed on the bottom dogs of the society. But, then, preaching a doctrine becomes meaningful only when it follows a scientific understanding and gives a correct lead to the solution of the problem. A Marxist may point out that dissociation of manual labour from intellectual labour is a product of class society. And that the antithesis between mental and physical labour, a corollary of the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, would 'vanish' only in a higher phase of communist society where labour becomes not only a means of life but life's prime want.^{164*} Gandhi did not approach the problem from

* The historical materialist treatment of this problem was offered by Engels in his *Anti-Duhring*. To quote from that famous Marxist classic :

"The old mode of production must therefore be revolutionised from top to bottom, and in particular the former division of labour must disappear. Its place must be taken by an organisation of production in which, on the one hand, no individual can put on to other persons his share in productive labour, this natural condition of human existence ; and in which on the other hand, productive labour, instead of being a means to the subjection of men, will become a means to their emancipation, by giving each individual the opportunity to develop and exercise all his faculties, physical and mental, in all directions ; in which, therefore, productive labour will become a pleasure instead of a burden.

"Today this is no longer a phantasy, no longer a pious wish. The present development of productive forces is already adequate as the basis on which the increase in production which must follow from the very fact of the

this sociological point of view. He would have replied that one need not wait for the distant future, but start from the immediate present.

Svadeśī

Svadeśī was a key concept in Gandhi's philosophy. It was not merely an economic doctrine; it also carried ideological implications. In *svadeśī* Gandhi saw at once not only the economic salvation of India, but also an answer to the psychological and political problems of the nationalist movement.

In a speech delivered before the Missionary Conference, Madras, on 14 February 1916, he defined the concept of *svadeśī* in the following terms:

"After much thinking I have arrived at a definition of *Swadeshi* that, perhaps, best illustrates my meaning. *Swadeshi* is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion. That is the use of my immediate religious surrounding. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects. In the domain of politics I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting."¹⁸⁵

We are concerned here with the application of *svadeśī* in the economic sphere. Gandhi stood for self-sufficiency of the country, and even of villages, except for such foreign things as are needed for the growth of the people. As has been noted by Dr. G. N. Dhawan, Gandhi's views on this aspect of *svadeśī* seem to have undergone an evolution.¹⁸⁶

socialisation of the productive forces—the abolition of the barriers and disturbing factors and of the waste of products and means of production resulting from the capitalist mode of production—can reduce the time required for labour, with every individual taking his share, to what our present conceptions would be a small amount."—Tr., Emile Burns, Burmon Publishing House, Calcutta, 1943, p. 279.

A study of his address on *svadeśi* delivered at the Missionary Conference, Madras, 1916, shows that he then stood for total self-sufficiency of the country and its economic isolation from the world. Referring to external trade he said: "If not an article of commerce had been brought from outside India, she should be today a land flowing with milk and honey. ...she can live for herself only if she produces and is helped to produce everything for her requirement within her own borders."

In 1926 he wrote: "I have never considered the exclusion of everything foreign under every conceivable circumstance as a part of *Swadeshi*. The broad definition of *Swadeshi* is the use of all home-made things to the exclusion of foreign things, in so far as such use is necessary for the protection of home-industry, more especially those industries without which India will become pauperized. In my opinion, therefore, *Swadeshi* which excludes the use of everything foreign, no matter how beneficent it may be, and irrespective of the fact that it impoverishes nobody, is a narrow interpretation of *Swadeshi*."¹⁶⁷

In *Yeravda Mandir* we read: "To reject foreign manufactures merely because they are foreign, and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion in one's country of manufactures for which it is not suited would be criminal folly, and a negation of the *Swadeshi* spirit."¹⁶⁸

This shows that he moved away from his earlier position.

Gandhi would certainly permit international trade and exchange of commodities if this meant an exchange of equal advantages and did not involve injustice.

However, if it was to be a question of choice, he would have preferred self-sufficiency. But as a matter of practical policy, he did not think that India should stand aloof in the matter of trade.*

He defined a *svadeśi* article as any article which "subverses the interest of the millions even though the capital and talent are foreign but under effective Indian control."¹⁶⁹

* "I would not wish India to live a life of complete isolation whereby it (*sic*) would live in water-tight compartments and allow nobody to enter her borders or to trade within her borders."—C. Rajagopalachar and J. C. Kumarappa, *The Nation's Voice*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1958, p. 51.

What was meant by effective Indian control? What industry could satisfy Gandhi as being Indian?

"An industry to be Indian must be demonstrably in the interest of the masses. It must be manned by Indians both skilled and unskilled. Its capital and machinery should be Indian and the labour employed should have a living wage and be comfortably housed, while the welfare of the children of the labourers should be guaranteed by the employers. This is an ideal definition."¹⁷⁰

Until 1931 Gandhi distinguished between the economic aspect of *svadeśī* and the economic boycott of foreign goods. In 1920 he categorically stated: "To say that Boycott is the same as *Swadeshi* even in effect is not to understand either. *Swadeshi* is an eternal principle... It means production and distribution of articles manufactured in one's own country." But "Boycott, on the other hand, is a temporary makeshift resorted to compel the hands of the British people by deliberately making an attempt to inflict monetary loss upon them. Boycott...operates as an undue influence brought in to secure one's purpose. It may indirectly result, but not unless it is persistent and prolonged, in greater manufacture at home..."

"I swear by *Swadeshi* because it is an evolutionary process gaining strength as it goes forward. Any organization can serve it. It is independent of the justice or the injustice of the rulers.... It is its own reward. ...*Swadeshi* and Boycott are not the same but are at the opposite poles."¹⁷¹

During the Civil Disobedience Movement (1931—1933) Gandhi acquiesced in the Congress' vigorously undertaking the boycott of British goods.¹⁷²

Gandhi, it seems, had come to believe that economic boycott could and should be used as a weapon of non-violent non-co-operation.

In 1939, in answer to a question by a Chinese visitor, he favoured the economic boycott of the aggressor nation.¹⁷³

The extract, given overleaf, from Gandhi's writings will give an idea as to Gandhi's concept of *svadeśī* vis-à-vis the *svadeśī* of the earlier days:

"Q. How does this *new* Swadeshi differ from the old ?

A. The old emphasized the indigenous nature of the products, irrespective of the method of production or the prospects of the products. I have ruled out organized industries, not because they are *not* Swadeshi, but because they do not need special support. They can stand on their own legs and, in the present state of our awakening, can easily command a market. According to the new orientation, if it is new, I would certainly have our Swadeshi organization to seek out all village industries and find how they are faring. We will have experts and chemists who will be prepared to place their knowledge at the disposal of villagers. We will, through our experts, offer to test the articles manufactured by village handicraftsmen and make them suggestions to improve their wares, and would sell them if they would accept our conditions."¹⁷⁴

Though Gandhi did not ordinarily favour legislative interference, yet we find him as an ardent supporter of protectionism. He pleaded strongly for stiff protective duties upon foreign goods in order to nurture national interests.¹⁷⁵ This may be cited as showing his allegiance to the Indian capitalist class. But a correct reading will be that he was not guided by any such definite interest, though objectively the Indian capitalists benefited by this demand.* As P. Spratt reminds us : "His support is no doubt likely to benefit the capitalists rather than anybody else, but he does not advocate with that intention. His protection is a villager's protection, designed to help the effort for self-sufficiency, not that for profits."¹⁷⁶

Economics of Khādi

Khādi occupied a pre-eminent place in Gandhi's plan for economic regeneration of the poverty-ridden village-India.**

* cf. "Ironically, *swadeshi* later lent ideological support to national economic planning."—Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, Penguin Books, 1968, Vol 2, p. 1209.

** The following is an apt characterization of the *Khādi* programme :

"Of all the non-violent weapons forged by Gandhi, *khadi* was the nearest moral equivalent of the infantryman's rifle. It was conducive to national solidarity. It provided the lowliest with a weapon of defence, which on a

He often referred to *Carkhā* or the spinning wheel as India's *Kāmadhenu*. It was conceived of as the image of *svadeśi*. The khādi movement aimed at restoring the spinning wheel to the millions of cottages in India wherefrom it was removed by unjust, illegal and tyrannical methods.

A detailed discussion of the economics of khādi, howsoever important that might be, cannot be undertaken for obvious reasons. For whether khādi was a valid proposition for the economic development of India in the days when Gandhi launched his programme, and/or whether it bears any relevance today to the economic growth of modern India, is not the point of discussion here. One may refer to Gandhi's writings on the subject and on the discussions made thereon.¹⁷⁷ We shall limit ourselves to presenting a bare outline incorporating Gandhi's arguments in favour of khādi and shall try to follow, as briefly as possible, the different phases of the khādi movement.

Gandhi claimed for *Carkhā* the honour of being able to solve the problem of economic distress in a most natural, simple, inexpensive and businesslike manner.¹⁷⁸ His claim for khādi was based on the following arguments :

1. it supplies the readiest occupation to those who have leisure and are in want of a few coppers ;
2. it is known to the thousands ;
3. it is easily learnt ;
4. it requires practically no outlay or capital ;
5. the wheel can be easily and cheaply made ;
6. the people have no repugnance to it ;

mass scale was formidable. Also like the infantryman's rifle it was a powerful and meaningful symbol.

"At the time of its inception, the constructive programme on *khādi* was indeed a stroke of genius, making an important contribution to several important needs within the independence movement. *Nationally* it provided a rallying symbol which the humblest villager could easily understand. *Politically* it was a powerful weapon providing a means whereby a sense of united action could be expressed in concrete form. *Economically* it was a means whereby the formidable problem of rural under-development would be turned to productive use. The *khādi* programme thus had a threefold purpose which was immediately understandable and recognizable within the framework of Indian tradition, and it was both constructive and purposeful."—Philip Zealey, 'Comments on Khadi' in *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 295.

7. it affords immediate relief in times of famine and scarcity ;

8. it alone can stop the drain of wealth, which goes out in the purchase of foreign cloth ;

9. it automatically distributes the millions thus saved among the deserving poor ;

10. even the smallest success means so much immediate gain to the people ;

11. it is the most potent instrument of securing co-operation among the people.¹⁷⁹

This sums up the main economic arguments in favour of khādi.

As has been seen above (p. 207 *supra*) the importance of the spinning wheel and khādi first dawned on Gandhi in 1919 when he had no idea about the wheel. At that period he could only realize that the chief cause of pauperization was the destruction of the spinning wheel by the British. In the early twenties, when the horizon of his experience expanded, he began to look at the problem from a realistic point of view. The problems of production and distribution of wealth presented themselves as real problems. At that period he began to popularize the spinning wheel with a view to preventing concentration of power and capital and to bringing about an equitable distribution of wealth. With this end in view he established the All-India Spinners' Association in 1925. Round about the period 1935 his views on khādi underwent further change. The commercial aspect of khādi yielded place to self-help aspect. Khādi Depots were set up. Self-sufficing khādi was given the first place in all khādi organizations.¹⁸⁰

Since khādi stood for a particular view of life and a particular philosophy, it claimed for itself a mission of reversing the existing unnatural order. To reverse the order was to restore the natural relation.¹⁸¹

As Gandhi wrote : "Khadi must be taken with all its implications. It means a wholesale Swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the necessities of life in India and

that too through the labour and intellect of the villagers. That means a reversal of the existing process. That is to say that, instead of half a dozen cities of India and Great Britain living on the exploitation and the ruin of the 700,000 villages of India, the latter will be largely self-contained, and will voluntarily serve the cities of India and even the outside world in so far as it benefits both the parties."¹⁸²

Incidentally, khādi was an effective instrument of mass contact. The organizational aspect has to be given due importance in any discussion on khādi.

Gandhi himself admitted this. In reply to a criticism of Saklatvala,* he wrote: "Khaddar has the greatest organizing power in it because it has itself to be organized and because it affects all India. If khaddar rained from heaven it would be a calamity. But as it can only be manufactured by the willing co-operation of starving millions and thousands of middle class men and women, its success means the best organization conceivable along peaceful lines. If cooking had to be revived and required the same organization, I should claim for it the same merit that I claim for Khaddar."

Besides the economic aspect, khādi had a symbolic significance too. As has been noted by Bharatan Kumarappa, "The most outstanding and the most popular of all the symbols associated with Gandhiji is undoubtedly the spinning wheel."¹⁸³

Carkhā, according to Gandhi, symbolizes a non-violent way of life. The economics of khādi stands on certain fundamental assumptions. For a proper appreciation of Gandhi's views it must be stated that the spinning wheel, besides its immediate practical utilitarian aspect, symbolized a 'new system'; it stood as an alternate system to the over-centralized factory civilization. As Gandhi wrote: "The science of Khadi requires decentralization of production and consumption."¹⁸⁴ Gandhi's emphasis on decentralized economy as the practical expression

* S. D. Saklatvala was a Communist member of the British Parliament. See *Indian Annual Register* 1927, I, 65 ff. and II, 117 ff. for the series of letters passed between him and Gandhi.

of non-violent way of life is consistent with his general outlook. To him, khādi, decentralization, genuine independence, i.e., freedom from exploitation, etc., were integrally related.

The economic and sociological premises of Gandhi's concept may legitimately be questioned if the basic assumptions of his theory are not accepted. One may also rightly hold¹⁸⁵ that his views betrayed an ignorance of the dynamics of history, or that, because of his failure to distinguish between industrialism and capitalism as a *system*—the technological basis of modern civilization and the acquisitive institution of private ownership of the means of production—the way he suggested was not sociologically valid. The judgement depends on one's own intellectual preference and commitment. Whether one accepts Gandhi's solution or not, it must be conceded that his reaction against factory-civilization and his plea for substitution of the same by self-sufficing decentralized village economy was *ultimately* rooted in his revulsion against concentration of economic power in the hands of a few, and that his economic ideal had an egalitarian* humanistic content as would be evident from the following :

"According to me the economic constitution of India and for the matter of that the world should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realized only if the means of production of elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be ; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others."¹⁸⁶

* "Gandhi's message was radically egalitarian....."—Gunnar Myrdal, *op. cit.*, p. 756.